Studies in Critical Social Sciences

Ricardo Duchesne

The Uniqueness of Western Civilization

BRILL

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The Uniqueness of Western Civilization

By

Ricardo Duchesne

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On the cover: The Horned helmet, Vikso, Zealand, Denmark, Late Bronze Age, 11th-10th BC. Photo: Lennart Larsen, the National Museum of Denmark.

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PREFACE

This book has five separate but closely related objectives. First, it seeks to trace the ideological sources behind the multicultural effort to "provincialize" the history of Western civilization. It will be argued that the devaluation of Western culture that swept the academic world starting around the 1960s was part of a wider and newly emerging intellectual movement that included the rise of anthropological relativism, critical theory, dependency theory, evolutionary materialism, postmodernism, feminism, and identity politics.

The second aim is to assess the empirical adequacy of a highly influential set of revisionist works published in the last two decades dedicated to the pursuit of dismantling the "Eurocentric" consensus on the "rise of the West." The focus will be on explicating, interpreting, connecting, systematizing, supplying background information, and refuting the arguments of multicultural revisionists who claim that there were "surprising similarities" between the West and the non-Western world as late as 1800–30 and that the Industrial Revolution was the one transformation that finally set Europe on a different path of development. This book is quite determined in its efforts to demonstrate that the entire revisionist school is founded on precarious and tendentious claims in its attempts to rewrite the history of the West. The questionable pursuit of the revisionist school will be addressed by means of a conscientious analytical and detailed review of a vast body of secondary sources and findings.

The third objective of this book will be to argue that the traditional Eurocentric historiography on the rise of the West still holds much significance despite the unrelenting criticisms it has faced in the last few decades. The standard historiography includes the classical exponents of Europe's uniqueness as well as contemporary historians and sociologists whose primary interests are directed towards debating the causes of Europe's ascendancy. In defending their perspectives, this book will also go beyond them by considering numerous additional sources from historians of Europe who have written about Western achievement from the ancient Greeks to the present. The central contention will be that the West has always existed in a state of variance from the rest of the world's cultures. For example, some of the most

significant divergences would include the "Greek miracle," the Roman invention of the legal persona, the Papal revolution, the invention of mechanical clocks, the Portuguese voyages of discovery, the Gutenberg revolution, the Cartographic revolution, the Protestant reformation, the "rational" mercantilist state, and the "industrial enlightenment." As such, the main question is not 'why modern science emerged in Europe and not in the civilizations of Islam and China,' nor 'why England industrialized first;' rather, it has to do with 'why the great accomplishments in the sciences and arts have been overwhelmingly European.'

The fourth objective is to insist that the development of a liberal-democratic culture was an indispensable component of the rise of the West. There is more to a modern agent in Western culture than a scientific or industrialized person who performs specialized roles based on effort and merit. The ideals of freedom and the reasoned pursuit of truth were cultivated and realized in the course of Western time.

Finally, the book will argue that the roots of the West's "restless" creativity and libertarian spirit should be traced back to the aristocratic warlike culture of Indo-European speakers. The Indo-Europeans were a distinctively pastoral, horse-riding, mobile, and war-oriented culture governed by a spirit of aristocratic egalitarianism. As this book will demonstrate, the primordial basis for Western uniqueness lay in the ethos of individualism and strife. For Indo-Europeans, the highest ideal of life was the attainment of honorable prestige through the performance of heroic deeds.

This book's clear admiration for Western civilization, its higher cultural legacy, and its aristocratic roots will likely satisfy none of the politically sensitive and motivated orthodoxies currently in vogue in academia. I am also aware that I have risked making arguments about areas of history I know little about. Hopefully I will have compensated somewhat for this lack by paying serious attention to the most pertinent, intelligent, and prominent secondary sources available to us. I should be satisfied if this book were to add some amount of fruitful controversy over this inexhaustible subject.

This book is the product of ten years of isolated research and secluded reflection. I am grateful for the opportunity to make a living as a professor at The University of New Brunswick. My greatest intellectual gratitude goes to my forbearers: Hegel, Weber, and Nietzsche. I have also benefitted from the scope and vision of Alexandre Kojeve's profound reading of Hegel's master-slave dialectic, Marija Gimbutas's archeological insights on the Indo-European conquest of Old Europe,

David Landes's promethean economic history of the world, and Christopher Dawson's vision of Europe as a culture made up of Classical, Barbarian, and Judeo-Christian elements. Each has taught me that details alone are no more than random notes.

I would like to express appreciation for the research assistance of two students: Sharon R. Munn for her sustained and reliable preparation of a very long bibliography, and Ellis Clare for her visits to my office for discussions on a whole range of topics. I am particularly grateful for the patience and encouragement of David Smith in reading and offering learned comments on the numerous emails I sent him over the last five years. Finally, my love and gratitude to my wife, Georgia Rondos, whose support made it possible for me to write this book and her great meals kept me and our children, Kleis and Dimitri, healthy.

CHAPTER ONE

THE FALL OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION AND THE RISE OF MULTICULTURAL WORLD HISTORY

> The greatest publicist of the Enlightenment, Voltaire, even while he advocated the widening of historical inquiry to embrace social and economic activities and their effects, strongly believed that the only objects worthy of historical study were the peaks, not the valleys, of the achievements of mankind. Isaiah Berlin, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*

> However much the science of culture [anthropology] may protest its innocence of all preferences or evaluations, it fosters a specific moral posture. Since it requires openness to all cultures, it fosters universal tolerance and the exhilaration deriving from the beholding of the diversity; it necessarily affects all cultures that it can still affect by contributing to their transformation in one and the same direction; it willy-nilly brings about a shift of emphasis from the particular to the universal: by asserting, if only implicitly, the rightness of pluralism, it asserts that pluralism is the right way; it asserts the monism of universal tolerance and respect for diversity; for by virtue of being an ism, pluralism is a monism. Leo Strauss

Early World Historians and the Idea of Progress

From the Enlightenment until about the 1970s the liberal idea that human history could be comprehended in a progressive way commanded wide credence in the West. While there were a variety of interpretations about the moving forces of history and the nature of the stages one would expect to find, not many world historians doubted that it was possible to offer a grand view of history typified by increasing knowledge and freedom. In the 19th century this view sometimes came with assumptions of racial hierarchy. "We are fully authorized to say," wrote William Swinton in his *Outline of the World's History*, published in 1874, "that the Aryans are peculiarly the race of progress." Similarly, in a popular high school textbook he authored in 1889, Philip Myers offered a narrative of progress with references to "the White, or Caucasian race" as "by far the most perfect type, physically, intellectually, and morally" (in Allardyce 2000: 35). Myers removed these racial remarks from later editions, but the liberal idea that history was

moving in a desirable direction continued to be infused with imperious attitudes toward cultures and peoples believed to be outside the mainstream of cultural progress.[1]

The idea of progress had indeed developed into much more than an explanation of world history; it spawned a Western arrogance that belittled the historical role of non-Western societies. As Marshall Hodgson (2000: 113–14) lamented in the early 1950s, world history was "essentially Western history amplified by a few unrelated chapters on other parts of the world." "Prehistoric man" and several of the ancient civilizations – Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Palestine – were sometimes treated fairly well, but once the story moved on to Greece, Rome, and medieval Europe, the Near East tended to disappear from the texts, except for a brief section on the expansion of Islam between the 8th and 12th centuries. The achievements of Indian and Chinese were highlighted, but Mesoamerican and Sub-Saharan cultures were usually given little attention until Europeans came into contact with them in modern times. There was a triumphalist assumption that Western peoples were always the progressive ones, and that Asians contributed little to human amelioration after the first millennium BCE. Western European civilization, having inherited the Judeo-Christian vision of a universal brotherhood of man, the Greek ideal of a free citizen, and the Roman legal tradition, was considered the "mainstream" of world history.

It would be extremely tendentious and unfair, however, to assume that the conception of world history Hodgson observed in the 1950s was simply the product of Western racial arrogance and ethnocentric malice. The study of world history was still in its infancy in the 1940s and 1950s and, yet, one can only marvel at the vast body of scholarship generated in earnest during the *first half of the 20th century* by Western-trained scholars on the cultures, traditions, and histories of *all* the regions of the world. A complete listing of these works would consume much of this chapter. Even more remarkable perhaps is that, by the early 1960s, scholars in the United States were already trying to deal with the problem of ethnocentrism in the study of non-Western cultures – some loudly calling for the integration of the new findings and ideas of anthropologists, sociologists, and "area studies" historians engaged in research on non-Western lands. Robert Crane, a 1962–63 fellow at the American Institute of Indian Studies, was already hoping

[1] The beginning sections of this chapter are based upon a previous publication, see Duchesne (2009).

that with "a self-conscious awareness of the problem of ethnocentrism," it would be possible for historians to study different cultures on their own terms and not as "replicas…of our own" (1964: 386). Mark Krug, an associate professor of education in history at the University of Chicago, also condemned what he called the "Europacentric" approach to world history, which assumed "that the Chinese, Indian, and Islamic civilizations attained a measure of historic importance only when they impinged upon the civilization of the West" (1964: 549).

The more historians learned about other cultures and civilizations, the more reasons they had to heed Hodgson's comment. In 1962, four years after he too had insisted that "world history is not European history" and that world history courses should be "genuinely global" rather than about "Europe and its world relationships," Leften Stavrianos published a two-volume high school textbook, *A Global History of Man* and *Readings in World History,* from the perspective that a world history course "should include an overview of the entire history of man from a consistent global viewpoint." Human history should not be taught "merely by adding the study of non-Western civilizations to the study of Western history," Stavrianos contended. Only by grasping the entirety of human history would the parts become "meaningful and comprehensible" (2000: 110–16)."[2] One year later, William McNeill's *The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community* (1963) was out in print, and the thesis of this book was quite clear: the history of the world is a panorama *not* of separate civilizations following their own rhythmic cycles, but of diverse cultures in a state of interaction:

> there has always been a process of cultural flow, and cultural stimulation between adjacent societies…the process of collision and contact, peaceful and warlike, between peoples of different cultures [has been] the central motor of historical change…. The generation of new styles of life seems to be related to the intensity of contact between people having alien ways of life (cited in Krug 1964: 547–51).

The idea that world history and Western civilization were synonymous was no longer taken for granted by scholars in the United States in the 1960s; it was veritably the subject of much reflection.[3]

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[2] See also Stavrianos, "A Global Perspective in the Organization of World History" (in Engle, 1964), where he discusses his two-volume work.

[3] M.D. Lewis was another historian who stressed the need for teaching world history as the interaction between civilizations. He called (1966) upon Western historians to take seriously "the views of Asians and Africans themselves" and approach the era of European hegemony "without false pride".

Termination of the Western Civilization Course

It would also be an oversimplification to view the Western Civilization requirements taught between World War I and the early 1960s as merely a way for American educators to instruct undergraduates in the belief that European history was the only world history that mattered, and that the United States was the sole legitimate heir of the European democratic tradition and protector of the free world.[4] When examining James Harvey Robinson's *An Introduction to the History of Western Europe*, published in 1902 and widely used in college classes, as well as his other textbook, *An Outline of the History of the Intellectual Class in Western Europe* (1915) – works which Allardyce (1982) claims prepared American educators "intellectually for the coming Western Civ course" after World War I – one simply encounters the optimistic, Whiggish idea that central to the narrative of world history is the progression of rationalism, science, and liberal values. Robinson was much less an ideologue than a scholar interested in the origins of the liberal values of his own American civilization. He saw the 17th century conflict between the English "people" and their king as a watershed in the triumph of freedom against authoritarianism. Looking at the 18th century Enlightenment, Robinson saw a continuation, this time in France, of the struggle for "freedom of the human mind."

Daniel Segal (2000) challenges Allardyce's (1982) influential explanation of the rapid spread of the Western Civilization course as a "patriotic purpose" that "swept campuses" in response to American military involvement in Europe. The authors of Western Civilization textbooks, Segal explains, clearly envisioned these courses as contributions to the preservation of "civilization" in the face of the outbreak of "barbarism" and "savagery" in 1914. This was true of Lynn Thorndike's *A Short History of Civilization* (1926), Harry Elmer Barnes's *An Intellectual and Cultural History of the Western World* (1937) and *The History of Western Civilization* (1935), and Edward McNall Burns's highly successful *Western Civilizations* (1941). These books were

[4] This view is expressed in a moderate way by Allardyce (1982). He points out that the Western Civ course was a "product conditioned by…a time when Americans envisioned themselves as partners with the Europeans in a great Atlantic civilization" (695). But this view is pushed too far by Prazniak (2000) when she explains the content of the course itself in terms of the political requirements of American imperialism and the cold war.

also committed to the idea of progress, as this passage from Burns's introduction to *Western Civilizations* makes clear: "[A]ll progress… has resulted from the growth of intelligence and tolerance, and… therein lies the chief hope for a better world in the future" (cited in Segal 2000: 770–805). Similarly, as J.B. Wolf notes, when in 1929 Robinson and Charles A. Beard wrote *The Development of Modern Europe,* they too identified "modern" history with the scientific struggle to liberate the mind from superstition and obscurantism, and placed the Enlightenment in the center of their story. According to Wolf, these historians, "seem to have had few doubts about the eventual victory that would free the human mind from the tyranny of old and outmoded ideas" (1964: 215).

This progressive attitude was not consigned only to universities but also found expression in high schools. *Modern History: The Rise of a Democratic, Scientific, and Industrialized Civilization*, a high school textbook published by Carl Becker in 1931, went through numerous editions. This text also emphasized the great issues and transformations of the past that carried forward the torch of progress. It was a book unafraid to raise big questions about "what history is about" – all in a straightforward manner, as if the rational directionality of history needed no justification. This same optimism is apparent in a recommendation for more European history in secondary schools that Beard made in 1934 in a report of the Commission on the Social Sciences where he identified the "study of the evolution of Western Civilization" with the study of "the development of democratic ideals and practices," "the accumulation and spread of knowledge and learning," and "the advance of science and technology" (in Allardyce 1982: 709).

The Western Civilization course requirement in American universities came to an end in the 1960s. By the time of the campus protests, Allardyce writes, professors "had lost faith" in the educational purpose of this course (1982). Some felt that the course had been conditioned by the era of two world wars, a time when Americans saw themselves as leaders of a great Atlantic civilization, but one that had since been outmoded by new imperatives of critical importance in China, Africa, Vietnam, and other parts of the globe. Others considered the course old-fashioned at a time when politicized students were calling for a liberal arts education without compulsory courses. For professional historians eager to produce "original" ideas in their increasingly fragmented fields, the concept of an all-inclusive course with a common purpose seemed dated. The question is, how did

the world history curriculum that superseded the required Western Civilization course in the 1980s and 1990s ultimately come to be framed within a multicultural ideology that emphatically degraded the role of Western culture itself?

In the 1960s world historians were genuinely debating the question of Western ethnocentrism and beginning to write texts from a global perspective. This was merely the onset of what would become a crusade against the West. Just as Western Civilization texts were being produced in the United States, world historians were paying serious attention to the achievements of the non-Western world, laying the groundwork for a vision in which the accomplishments of the world's peoples were recognized within the framework of a cumulative conception of history.

World History Texts from the 1920s to the 1940s

The books I've chosen as representative of a progressive vision of world history are authored by a diverse group: H.G. Wells, *Outline of History* (1920); James Henry Breasted, *Ancient Times, A History of the Early World* (published in 1916, and largely rewritten in 1935); M. Rostovzeff, *A History of the Ancient World* (1923); Christopher Dawson, *The Age of the Gods: A Study in the Origins of Culture in Prehistoric Europe and the Ancient East* (1928); and V. Gordon Childe's widely read *Man Makes Himself* (1936) and *What Happened in History* (1942). These works, each in its own way, presented human history as a directional process of cumulative learning, not only in terms of technically useful knowledge but also of moral-practical ideas. Their basic message, even if not always explicitly stated, was that world history was a *universal* learning process that could be reconstructed on the basis of *distinct* eras and *successive* stages. It was a West-centered message no doubt, but one which tried, as much as the sources available at the time allowed, to understand the contributions of non-Western cultures. Each of these books contained detailed sections on all the major civilizations of the ancient world.

Let's begin with Breasted who observed without hesitation that "while Europe still lay in Stone Age barbarism, the peoples of the Ancient Near East gave the world for the first time a whole group of further inventions [in addition to those of prehistoric peoples] surpassed in importance only by those of the modern world," in the practical arts, in the use of the potter's wheel, the potter's furnace,

the earliest metal work and the art of hollow casting, glass-making, paper-making, and other industries. They also made essential contributions in writing, poetry, and recording history, in mathematics and astronomy, and in the earliest belief "in a sole God and his fatherly care for all men." But the "East" had not yet "gained the idea of a free citizen," "had made little inquiry into the natural causes of such things" as storms and eclipses, and "suffered from a lack of freedom of the mind." While the Greeks and Romans carried the learning process forward, Breasted appreciated the later contributions of non-Western cultures: the Muslims "developed a civilization far higher than that of the Franks, and indeed the highest of that age in Europe, [and] were the leading students of science, astronomy, mathematics, and grammar" (Breasted 1935: 279–81, 790).[5]

Rostovzeff's two-volume work, *A History of the Ancient World*, is a true masterpiece. Written in Russian in 1923 and translated into English in 1925, it was revised in 1929 after "important new discoveries" were made in excavations in Egypt, Mesopotamia, Syria, and Asia Minor. Rostovzeff presented a picture of successive ancient civilizations spreading "by degrees over the world," each reaching a "zenith of cultural creation" followed by a period of stagnation and decline. But in terms of ancient history, the decline was temporary, for the accomplishments of the old civilizations served as a foundation for the creation of newer ones. If the

> Greeks were especially remarkable for the power of their creative sprit… it must be remembered that the lofty creation of Greece was developed from the culture attained by the ancient East; that Greek civilization became world-wide as the result of a fresh and prolonged contact with the Eastern cultures after the conquest of the East by Alexander the Great.

What allowed Europe later to develop "not from the lowest stratum of prehistoric life but from a comparatively high level" was that Rome inherited, transformed, and passed on to it "the civilization of the East and of Greece" (1945: 2–11).

These works did not always focus on the West. Well's classic *Outline of History* truly offers what the subtitle indicates – "a plain history of life and mankind." The book gave more attention to Europe, but

[5] These are not isolated passages; in page after page Breasted expresses a sincere admiration for the cultural accomplishments of the Sumerian, Babylonian, Egyptian, and Persian civilizations.

dedicated many sections to India and China, and contained complete chapters on the Islamic and the Mongol empires. Wells was so impressed by the "urbanity, the culture, and the power of China under the early Tang rulers," he felt compelled to pose the "grand problem" we now associate with the Sinologist Joseph Needham:

> The Chinese knew of gunpowder in the sixth century, they used coal and gas heating locally centuries before these things were used in Europe; their bridge-building, their hydraulic engineering were admirable; the knowledge shown in their enamel and lacquer ware is very great. Why did they never organize the system of record and cooperation in inquiry that has given the world modern science (1961: 465)?

The efforts of specialists had not yet provided enough sources for Wells to offer a reply. Rather than responding with the "platitudinous answers" he found elsewhere, he reminded readers that China never experienced a decline in creativity that was permanent, as did ancient Greece and Rome, or comparable to that of the Arabs, "who blazed like a star for half a dozen generations after the appearance of Islam" but never again achieved the same level of creativity. While China was not as progressive as Europe *after* 1500, it did experience throughout its long history "several liberalizing movements" (464–66).[6] Overall, Wells had a progressive vision of the course of human history. He was disillusioned by the "disaster" and "slaughter" of World War I, but still believed that

> it was possible [at least until the year 1914] to view the history of the world as a progress, interrupted but always resumed, towards peace and freedom. In most of the states of the world political and parliamentary freedom was extending, personal rights were more protected, liberty of thought and of speech was expanding, and states were beginning to be less irresponsible in their foreign policy (828).

Childe, a Marxist anthropologist who, like Friedrich Engels, espoused the 19th century evolutionary concept of stages of "Savagery, Barbarism, and Civilization," also saw progressive advances in technology stemming from the expansion of human knowledge. This growth in technology was, for Childe, the foundation for most progress in other spheres of society, art, politics, ethics, and philosophy. Childe, however, recognized that the environmental differences in the earliest

[6] Wells also wondered "why did the Chinese never discover America or Australia" despite their "considerable overseas trade" during the period of the "cultured Mings" (465).

centers of civilization were too great to expect parallel sequences of progress. He considered diffusion, or contact between cultures, a major factor in the process of change. He also recognized that human progress was discontinuous. But when Childe looked at history as a whole – universal history – he saw a cumulative pattern: "The upward curve," he concluded in *What Happened in History*, "resolves itself into a series of troughs and crests. But … no trough ever declines to the low level of the preceding one; each crest out-tops its last precursor" (1964: 292). In a small book, *History*, published in 1947 as "Volume Six of the series Past and Present, Studies in the History of Civilizations," Childe stated, in a matter-of-fact way, that the main business of the world historian was "to yield a science of progress," "to disclose an order in the process of human history." Aware that the course of human history was "distinctly erratic," Childe thought it still possible to recombine and rearrange enough facts from the historical and archaeological records to show that world history in general did exhibit "an orderly sequence," and a "continuous linear sequence" of improvements (1947: 3–14).

In 1928, the distinguished Catholic historian Dawson had already presented an even more refined account of human history in the *Age of the Gods*. While "it is impossible," he wrote, "to deny the reality and importance of cultural progress," it "is not a continuous and uniform movement, common to the whole human race," but rather "an exceptional condition, due to a number of distinct causes" (1970: xvi). The adaptation of a people to their "original environment without the intrusion of human factors from outside" brings social change, but it generally exemplifies the case of primitive peoples, who barely change. Moving and having to readapt to a new geographical environment is what encourages at least the "simplest type" of cultural change. But the "most important of all the causes of cultural change," he explained, was "the case of two different peoples, each with its own way of life and social organization, which mix with one another usually as a result of conquest, occasionally as a result of peaceful contact" (xvii).

It was not McNeill, but Dawson who first hypothesized that interaction between different cultures was the chief motor of change: "It is the origin of practically all those sudden flowerings of new civilization, which impress us as almost miraculous." Dawson thought that merely borrowing some cultural element was an important common occurrence demonstrating the "close interdependence of cultures," but added that such borrowing did not automatically spark social progress. Real change – "intense cultural activity" – comes when (a) an old, advanced culture is reawakened via a vital "organic process of fusion" with a new

people, or (b) when "the creative activity of a new people [is] stimulated by contact with the old autochthonous culture" (xii–xx). Thus, the Mycenaean culture that gradually fused with and replaced the old Minoan civilization and was a "new type of warlike society which arose from the contact between the invading Indo-European peoples and the Archaic Culture of the Near East," in turn later fused with a new wave of Indo-European tribal peoples. This new wave would have resulted in the "complete barbarisation" of the Greek mainland world (and not the rise of Hellenic civilization) except thanks to the creative survival of the older Mycenaean culture and the creative adaptation of the new invaders to the old traditions of the Mediterranean cultures. Dawson clearly understood that *external* contacts and borrowing were not enough; the change, if it was to be "fully progressive," had to "come from *within*," from the creative activity of cultures stimulated by their fusion with other cultures (256, 360–61, 383).[7]

These early world histories gave readers the sense that over the course of human history there was a meaningful pattern in the direction of higher levels of technical knowledge, material well-being, and moral-practical insights. In their very preoccupation with Western civilization as the "high history" of mankind, they cultivated an understanding of history that was *trans-cultural* in the sense that successive, *connected* cultures were interpreted as steps in a *single universal* process.[8]

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[7] Dawson was a superb world historian in his day, as revealed in the collection of his articles in *Dynamics of World History* (first edited with an introduction by John J. Mulloy in 1958). Reissued in 1978, the book was recently released again with a new introduction by Dermot Quinn (2002). I shall be paying serious attention to his two books, *The Making of Europe* (1935) and *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture* (1950), in chapter eight.

[8] See the conclusion of another inspiring work, *The Conquest of Civilization* (1926), by Breasted:

> Today, still disclosing the successive stages of the long human career, the stone first-hatchets lie deep in the river gravels of Egypt and France; the furniture of the pile-villages rests at the bottom of the Swiss lakes; the majestic pyramids and temples announcing the dawn of civilization rise along the Nile; the silent and deserted city-mounds by the Tigris and Euphrates shelter their myriads of clay tablets; the palaces of Crete look out toward the sea they once ruled; the Hittite cities yield up the wonderful story of their newly deciphered writing; the noble temples and sculptures of Greece still proclaim the new world of beauty and of freedom first revealed by the Greeks; the splendid Roman roads and aqueducts assert the supremacy and organized control of Rome; and the Christian church

World History Texts in the 1960s

This progressive, hopeful vision continued into the 1960s, as world historians increasingly wrote from a world-oriented perspective. It was certainly articulated in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) *History of Mankind*: *Cultural and Scientific Developments, Volume 1, Prehistory and the Beginnings of Civilization*, published in 1963. This massive volume (873 pages of small print) was intended to shed light on humankind's "cultural and scientific development," starting with the prehistory of the peoples of Asia, Africa, and America – "all alike discussed" – and ending with Bronze Age civilizations. It gave "equal time" to the history of the world's cultures without hesitating to trace the "expansion of human consciousness" and the higher stage of cultural development achieved by the Upper over the Middle Palaeolithic cultures – higher because "the latest Palaeolithic hunters had at last succeeded in bringing speech to a point where the precise naming of things and the elementary discussion of ideas had become possible." It spoke of the "continuous improvement of material equipment" by the Palaeolithic and Neolithic cultures and showed how they laid the foundation on which later civilizations would be built (1963: 820, 104, 111, 351). It contrasted the "barbarism of the Neolithic period" with the birth of urbanized life, and described in detail "the immense progress in culture and in technical knowledge" achieved by "mankind" during the Bronze Age (359, 834). By studying "the interrelations, across time and space, of ideas, values and techniques," the *History of Mankind* sought to offer a true universal history – a history of Egypt, Mesopotamia, China, India, and Phoenicia; that is, the history of "the advance of man in general" (xii–xiv, 829).

This concept of progress was also obvious in William McNeill's dynamic *Rise of the West* (1963). Generally considered the most comprehensive account of human history at the time, the book argued that mankind's predominant development after 1500 was the ascendancy of Western culture. McNeill, always careful to avoid pat answers about the nature of human history, confidently proclaimed that when

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spires proclaim the new ideal of universal human brotherhood. These things continue to reveal the age-long course along which the developing life of man has moved; and in thus following his conquest of civilization, we have been following a *rising trail* (650).

considering the dazzling political and scientific changes of modern Europe, "progress there has most certainly been in science and technology; progress also, it seems to me, in many important aspects of human relations" (729).[9] Less hesitant in its appreciation of human progress was Fernand Braudel's *A History of Civilizations* (1993), first published in 1963 in France as part of *Le Monde actuel, historie et civilisations*. This may seem surprising given that commentators have generally downplayed the liberal theme of progress in his books. Braudel viewed the world's civilizations as "the history of continual and mutual borrowing over many centuries," but he also believed that each civilization was "very different" and played a unique role in the march of human progress. Differences between cultures arose from the variety of "material and biological conditions [that] always help determine the destiny of civilizations," cultural origins, and geographical links to the world (8).

If China and Black Africa were relatively isolated, Islam was an "intermediary" civilization linking the Far East, Europe, and Black Africa. Europe was the only civilization "linked in all directions to the seven seas." If China was a continuous civilization – "imagine the Egypt of the Pharaohs miraculously preserved" – Europe and Islam were "derivative civilizations" (169, 42) built on those that "preceded it in the Near East." If Islam rose and declined, the "West" experienced "breaks with the past and the birth of new civilizations," from Greece to Rome to Christian Europe through Islam to Renaissance Europe. If Islam was "the most brilliant civilization in the Old World" (73) between the 8th and 12th centuries, and China was ahead of the West in science and technology" until at least the 13th century, Europe "took up the torch" of progress in the 14th century.

Since its origins in Greek culture, "the tendency of Western civilization," Braudel observed, "has been towards rationalism" – as well as greater freedom (23). Echoing the "great idea" of Western Civilization courses, Braudel embraced the notion that the growth of liberty was "one of the secrets that explain[ed] Europe's progress" (316): from the development of towns "marked by unparalleled freedom"; through franchises or corporate groups that operated independently of the state; through the Renaissance's "intellectual ferment," which "preached

[9] He writes on the same page: "However weak the reed, human reason has yet a rapier point."

respect for the greatness of the human being as an individual"; through the Reformation, which "laid the bases for freedom of conscience"; to the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man, which stated that all Frenchmen were citizens with equal liberties; to the revolutions of 1848, which established the principle of universal suffrage (325–31).[10]

Rise of Dependency Theory

Just as this particular vision of world history was gaining ground it came under fierce attack in the 1960s and 1970s.[11] In the context of the Soviet experiment, the threat of nuclear destruction, the Vietnam War, the (relative) growing gap between poor and rich nations, and the creation of pan-Arab and pan-African identities, the notion that Western Europe and the United States – as liberal-democratic cultures – were frontrunners on the path of human progress seemed naive and ethnocentric. In the past, voices of discontent had protested Whiggish and Enlightenment notions of progress and human "perfectibility." Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) argued that the happiest period of the

[10] Braudel considered it "both fair and appropriate" for the Western world, during the cold war conflict of ideologies, "to call itself 'the free world' " (315). We shall see later, however, that Braudel was also a central promoter of the idea that the deep structural shapers of history were geographical, biological, and demographic factors, including *popular* beliefs.

[11] Many other world history textbooks published or redesigned in the 1960s, however, continued to articulate the idea of progress; and they did so in the context of a less Eurocentric narrative. The two-volume text, *A History of the World* (1960), by Chester Starr, Charles Nowell, Bryce Lyon, Raymond Stearns and Theodore Hamerow, contained chapters and sections on the cultural achievements of all the world's peoples, although most of the book was still dedicated to the progress of Western civilization. Thomas P. Neill's *Story of Mankind* (1968) also devoted more attention to Western civilization, but it did at least "assume a unity in the story of mankind that is based on its common origin, its common destiny, its common human nature, and its occupancy of a common globe" (6). In his foreword to the English edition (of the *Histoire Universelle Larousse*) *Larousse Encylopedia of Ancient and Medieval History* (1981[1964]), Arnold Toynbee wrote: "In this work, Western writers and editors have made a valiant effort to transcend the parochial Western point of view and to present the history of mankind as the sum of all the efforts of all sections of the human race….[This work] has earned the right to its title. It has made a notable new departure in giving non-Western contributions to mankind's culture a place in the sun" (xxv–xxvi). The 5th edition of Edward M. Burns and Philip L. Ralph's *World Civilizations: Their History and Their Culture* (1974) was "thoroughly revised" to include materials and recent historical research on the history of Africa, China, Japan, and the Indian subcontinent – all in a text in which, as stated in the preface, the "basic philosophical interpretation underlying the narrative is the conviction that most human progress thus far has resulted from the growth of intelligence and respect for the rights of man."

human race ended with civilization. Robert Malthus (1766–1834) observed that an increased population would always tend to outrun the ability to produce enough food. Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) complained that since the "last great age" of the Renaissance, history appeared to be "a development in decline." However, it was from the 1960s onwards that the notion of sustained *Western* progress came under increasing and continuous criticism by scholars interested in the causes of persistent poverty in the Third World.[12] Samir Amin (1970), Andre Gunder Frank (1967, 1969), Walter Rodney (1972), and numerous others charged that Western "progress" was really a process by which Europe and the United States had enriched themselves through the exploitation of Africa, the Americas, and Asia. These critics insisted that it was wrong to regard Western societies as self-sustaining, and repudiated the idea that European civilization on its own generated the means to out-develop the rest of the world. It was the systematic conquest and destruction of the Incas and the Aztecs and the extraction of gold and silver from the Americas in the 16th century that boosted the fortunes of Europe, and that included the brutal importation of African slaves to work in sugar, tobacco, and cotton plantations in the Americas from about 1600 to 1850.

These authors, better known as "dependency" theorists, were not really world historians as much as pioneers of "development studies," and their attacks were not directed at the liberal world histories produced in the West, but at a group of social scientists writing under the rubric of "modernization theory." Modernization theories enjoyed their greatest popularity during the 1950s and 1960s when Talcott Parsons, Neil Smelser, Daniel Lerner, Richard Bendix, Samuel Huntington, and Walt Rostow published some of their most influential works.[13] These scholars, too, were not world historians but sociologists

[12] Outside the United States, the idea of progress faced considerable challenges, particularly in France and Germany after World War I. Discontent with modernity, liberal, secular, and industrial civilization began with the romantics and ethnic-nationalists, swelling by the early 20th century into a veritable mass movement that culminated in the "national socialist" revolution of the Nazis. See the fascinating account by Fritz Stern (1961).

[13] Talcott Parsons, *Societies: Evolutionary and Comparative Perspectives* (1966); Neil Smelser, *Social Change in the Industrial Revolution* (1959); Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society* (1958); Richard Bendix, *Nation Building and Citizenship* (1964); Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (1968); W.W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (1960).

and political scientists. They did, however, draw heavily on 19th century classical evolutionary theory and its assumption that the course of human history had a *universal* pattern underlying the multitude of seemingly accidental and unconnected events. Modernization theorists believed that long-term trends were clearly evident in human history, from traditional to modern societies, from relationships based on ascription to relationships based on personal effort and merit, from focus on groups to focus on autonomous individuals, from patrimonial adjudication and enforcement to universally applicable laws and rights. While aware that not all societies followed the same evolutionary path, they believed that the course of history overall had resulted in the betterment of human existence. And they were optimistic that Western liberal-democratic nations could accelerate the development of poor traditional societies through programs of population control, the transfer of technology, investment capital in the form of foreign aid, and the diffusion of liberal attitudes and entrepreneurial skills.

But the modernizing efforts of Western elites did not create the results theorists had anticipated, at least in the short term. Poverty persisted or even worsened in many newly independent countries in the Third World. In the 1970s dictatorial regimes rather than democracies appeared to be gaining ground in much of Latin America. Recurrent national and local wars, swelling populations, increasing social inequalities, and ethnic factionalism plagued most of Africa and the Middle East. Life in the advanced nations did not seem so rosy either as modernization itself seemed to be producing numerous pathological side-effects such as increasing delinquency, urban decay, community breakdown, pollution, and economic dislocation. Just as important perhaps was the charge that modernization theory was ethnocentric in that it elevated the history of Western civilization to the level of universal truth, as "the model" – of rationalism, secularism, and liberalism – to be followed by "less developed" nations rather than their own preferred paths (Kesselman 1973; Wiarda 1981). This charge of ethnocentrism eroded the confidence of modernization theorists who basically agreed with the relativistic assumptions of their critics that there were no value-neutral grounds on which they could defend Western values. Modernization theory had drawn heavily from Max Weber's argument that ultimate principles and moral values – as opposed to empirical or technocratic problems of efficiency – are not amenable to rational evaluation. In the end, the influence of modernization theory declined sharply during the 1970s despite growing evidence of

expanding education, increases in per capita GNP, and dropping infant mortality rates in Third World countries like Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and South Korea, as well as Brazil, Mexico, and Argentina.[14]

Wallerstein's World-System and Critical Theory

Meanwhile, the anti-imperialist world outlook of dependency theory was no longer confined to a few academics but gained a popular following among young sociologists and political scientists. Even as dependency theory was carefully criticized for ignoring factors inside Third World countries such as political corruption, gender inequality, and the concentration of farmland in a few families, a growing mass of anti-imperialist literature continued to accumulate in the 1970s. This was the context for the publication of Immanuel Wallerstein's multivolume *The Modern World-System*, which exercised a long-lasting, commanding influence on the writing of world history (1974, 1980, 1989). Wallerstein added little to the dependency theory argument that the world economy was structured in such a manner that core societies developed at the expense of peripheral ones. However, his global or "world-system" perspective was seen as a new contribution "in emphasizing," in Roland Robertson's words, "the idea that the world is a systemic phenomenon and that much of what has been traditionally analysed by social scientists in societal, or more broadly, civilizational terms can and should be relativized and discussed along global-systemic lines" (1992: 400).

Wallerstein distinguished three major stages in history of which the first was referred to as "mini-systems," where relatively small, self-sufficient economic regions with a single cultural outlook dominated. These mini-systems – minute and short-lived – existed throughout the long eras of hunting and gathering, horticultural, and early agricultural societies. The basic principles of exchange of these mini-systems were "reciprocity" and "gift-giving." The second stage was that of "world-empires" (such as ancient Egypt, the Persian Empire, and

[14] It came as a surprise to dependency theorists when the Marxist Bill Warren (1973) observed that capitalist development, not "underdevelopment," had been taking place through the 1960s in selected regions (especially the East Asian 'Newly Industrializing Countries,' or NICs) as a result of foreign investments. Berger (1986) used the experience of East Asian industrialization as a refutation of dependency theory.

Imperial Rome) which were founded on an agricultural economy, connected by wide networks of commerce, and supported by strong military and political rule, coercive taxation, and conquest. The third stage began in the 16th century, when Europe's merchant economy expanded throughout the globe, creating a "new division of labor" based primarily on economic-market exploitation rather than political-military domination. This was the birth of modern capitalism when the globe was gradually incorporated into a single, so-called "modern world-system" of economic interdependencies. It was a stage in which the world's peripheral or less developed societies were eventually drawn into the dominant Western capitalist system providing inexpensive labor, accessible raw materials, and markets for manufactured goods.[15]

The world-system approach of Wallerstein, as one admirer, Jerry Bentley, noted in his "Shapes of World History in Twentieth Century Scholarship," "deeply influenced the way historians, anthropologists, and scholars in other disciplines [understood] the dynamics of modern world history." The essential message of his approach was that "modern world history made sense only in the context of Western imperial and colonial hegemony" (1996: 3–35). The attack on the West and on the possibility of a universal history, however, did not stem from any one person or school of thought. It was the work of many elite groups, cultural relativists, post-colonialists, Foucault-inspired New Historicists, and deconstructionists. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to analyse the influences of these groups, but two philosophical outlooks deserve further reflection. The first is the "negative philosophy of history" of Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, expressed most forcefully in their enormously influential book, *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* published in 1944. The second, the one I shall focus on, is the cultural relativism that grew out of the field of anthropology in the early 20th century and which by the 1980s had transformed the social sciences and the humanities.

The *Dialectic of Enlightenment* turned the 19th century liberal idea of human progress on its head: the history of Western civilization was a history of regress. The book sought to explain how Nazism and the

[15] In the last chapter of the *Modern World-System I*, Wallerstein drew a clear distinction between world-empires and "the modern world -system" (1974: 346–57), but later on articulated the idea of three stages in history and of "mini-systems," in *Unthinking Social Science* (2001: 231–32, 247–48).

Holocaust had been possible in Western Europe, how modern science, technology, and instrumental reason had been employed in the service of fascism, and how Western culture had brought "mankind into a new kind of barbarism." It offered a sweeping critique of the Occidental tradition of reason, tracing the increasing power of "instrumental reason" – domination over human nature, the environment, and labor through factory organization – back to the "turning points" of Western civilization: from the "enlightened character of Homer," to the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, to the mass culture industry and the capitalist bureaucratic state (1982: 3–42). Western reason was inextricably caught up with domination and terror. Much as "bourgeois" ideology postulated the idea of a free and humane social life, political domination was at the base of modern Galilean science and Enlightenment universalism:

> In the most general sense of progressive thought, the Enlightenment has always aimed at liberating men from fear and establishing their sovereignty. Yet the fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant (3).

Calculability, efficiency, and impersonality were the basic characteristics of this pattern of domination: to the extent that nature was perceived by Westerners as neutral, disenchanted, and without intrinsic qualities, it was open to manipulation and destruction. The modern West's dominating characteristic was the reduction of heterogeneity to homogeneity, spontaneity to repetition, and individuality to sameness, all defined as the elimination of the Other. The manipulative power of monopolistic mass society in the United States, the Stalinist regime in the Soviet Union, and the Nazis were variants of the same totalitarian impulse contained in the history of Western rationalism. Indeed, by finding the seeds of totalitarianism in the fabric of Western culture, Adorno and Horkheimer broke down the distinction between democratic liberalism and fascism.[16]

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[16] In fairness to Horkheimer, in his later writings he sought to rescue the positive side of Western philosophy, its capacity for reflection and critical consciousness; see in particular his essay "Traditional and Critical Theory," in Horkheimer (1982). As critics of the debasing effects of mass culture, one could argue that Horkheimer, and certainly Adorno, who is known as a "cultural elitist," were defenders of Europe's high culture; and this is true, but, as I will argue in chapter five, the Enlightenment and the liberal-democratic culture of the West are not only central components of the West's uniqueness, they are also inextricably part of what it means to say "rise" of the West.

This radical critique of Western civilization, found as well in Herbert Marcuse's celebrated *Reason and Revolution* (1941) and *One Dimensional Man* (1964) – which claimed that bourgeois society threatened the existence of "human reality" and that a "total and radical revolution" was both necessary and defensible – did not directly impact the writing of world history. However, its abandonment of the classical Marxist confidence in progress and scientific rationality, did capture the political imagination of students and intellectuals during the 1960s and 1970s, and became a key component in the formation of the New Left. In many parts of the world, radical protest movements against American foreign policy, and Western modernization at large, found much inspiration in the writings of the Frankfurt School. In fact, this School would generate a whole new form of "negative" consciousness, otherwise known as "Critical Theory," across campuses and across the disciplines: critical ethnography, cultural studies, race theory, critical pedagogy, cultural Marxism, critical legal studies, and much more. The agent of this negative posture would be the engaged "critical" writer/activist/artist/tenured radical who would use his/her writing, art, and classroom to undermine and expose the evils of Western culture.[17]

Franz Boas's Relativism and Marvin Harris's Cultural Materialism

But perhaps the most devastating assault on the idea of Western progress came from anthropology, starting with the pen of Franz Boas. Known for his accomplishments as a teacher, administrator, researcher, founder and president of societies, editor, lecturer, and field worker, as well as the author of half a dozen books and hundreds of articles, Boas has been claimed by Margaret Mead as "the man who made anthropology into a science," and by Marvin Harris as "one of the most influential figures in the history of the social sciences" (1971: 250–89). Although Boas did not use the term "cultural relativism," the thrust of his classic 1911 work, *The Mind of Primitive Man*, was that Western culture should not be regarded as superior simply because it had "advanced far beyond the stages" in which other cultures were still living. The idea of directionality in history and the tendency to view

[17] Two commendable sources from a sympathetic perspective on this school and its impact on social science and radical politics are Held (1980) and Jay (1973).

Western culture as mankind's highest achievement created the inevitable impression that primitive cultures were inferior:

> The superiority of our inventions, the extent of our scientific knowledge, the complexity of our social institutions, our attempts to promote the welfare of all members of the social body, create the impression that we, the civilized people, have advanced far beyond the stages on which other people linger, and the assumption has arisen of an innate superiority of the European nations and of their descendants….Since the intellectual development of the White race is the highest, it is assumed that its intellectuality is supreme and that its mind has the most subtle organization (1963: 20).

This was no doubt a powerful challenge against certain classical evolutionary theorists, such as Herbert Spencer (1820–1903), who subscribe to the belief that the evolution of society was one of constant improvement and that his homeland England stood at the apex of human progress. Boas insisted that the correct frame of mind for an anthropologist was to view all cultures equally with a neutral eye in terms of their own merits. This critique soon gained popularity within cultural anthropology, which by its very nature calls on field workers to imagine unfamiliar cultural traits from the point of view of *them* rather than *us*. Margaret Mead was very clear about the meaning of Boasian relativism:

> [I]t stood against any grading of cultures in hierarchical systems which would place our own culture at the top and place other cultures of the world in a descending scale according to the extent that they differ from ours (cited in Wright 2000: 14).

By the early 1960s this relativism had gained much favour within the social sciences and humanities. In 1963, for example, Lucian Pye, a political scientist studying development, wrote that "a generation of instruction in cultural relativism has had its influence, and social thinkers are no longer comfortable with any concept which might suggest a belief in 'progress' or 'stages of civilization' " (in Fukuyama 1992: 352). We discussed above, too, how historians like Krug and Stavrianos were trying to think of new ways to teach and write world history without a "Western-European ethnocentric bias," and how modernization theory seemed unable to respond to the charges of ethnocentrism. At the same time, we cannot underestimate a third important academic current of the 1960s: the consolidation of evolutionary materialism and its odd combination with Boasian relativism. The classical conception of social evolution, it should be noted, included an "idealist" and

a "materialist" point of view. The founder of the former view was the great sociologist Auguste Comte, who believed that the long course of human history could be described in terms of the intellectual development of the mental capacities of humans through three stages: theological, metaphysical, and positive. The founder of the materialist view was Lewis Morgan (1818–81) who held that the ultimate moving force of history was technological change which originated in the human need to procure shelter, food, and security. Both perspectives view social evolution as directional, cumulative, and progressive, but it was the materialist version which gained ascendency in the 1960s through its incorporation of other fields of knowledge – biology, geography, and economics – thereby giving it the quality of precision, verifiability and "scholarly" status.

Leslie White was to be an important figure in the reconstruction and consolidation of Morgan's evolutionary materialism. In two prominent books, *Science of Culture* (1949) and *Evolution of Culture* (1959) he argued that cultures were essentially adaptive strategies, and that cultural evolution occurred primarily through improvements in the type and amount of energy harnessed per capita. The works of Julian Steward, most prominently his *Theory of Cultural Change* (1955), continued along these lines but with added emphasis on the particularities of each culture. This accent on the specifics of cultures was intended as a compromise between the universal/unilinear perspective of classical evolutionism and Boas's emphasis on the need of researchers to focus less on grand theories and more on the collection of detailed ethnographic accounts from many different cultures.

But how did Boas's relativism find itself at home with an evolutionary materialism that endorsed a progressive view in the material conditions of life? How did it deal with the actual technological and scientific advancement of some cultures over others? Were more advanced cultures "superior" in their adaptive strategies than the less developed ones? One might say that a compromise between these two currents was already in the works when Gerhard Lenski and Jean Lenski, went on to argue, in their widely used textbook, *Human Societies: An Introduction to Macro-Sociology* (1974), that sociocultural evolution should be judged from a strictly neutral and scientific perspective "with no *implicit* moral judgments" (79).[18] The fact that

[18] The success of this text is testified by the publication of an eleventh edition in the year 2008; co-authored with Patrick Nolan rather than Jean Lenski.

societies were classified along evolutionary stages was merely a reflection of the different ways in which they had adapted to the biophysical world. There was no need to make evaluative judgments about the beliefs systems of different cultures; the philosophical outlooks and artistic styles of cultures were hardly significant as compared to the quality of "information" that was "relevant to the manipulation of the material world" (Lenski 1976: 555).

However, it was Marvin Harris, particularly in his vigorously argued books, *The Rise of Anthropological Theory* (1971) and *Cultural Materialism: The Struggle for a Science of Culture* (1980), who would orchestrate a seemingly incongruous yet compelling synthesis containing the following five elements: i) Boas's cultural relativism, ii) the Marxist classical model of three levels of culture (infrastructure, structure, and superstructure), iii) a rejection of every vestige of (Western) progressivism, iv) a dismissal of "idealist" philosophies unconnected to the realities of survival and reproduction, and v) an endorsement of scientific objectivity in relation to the study of the material conditions of life. Harris coined a new term – "cultural materialism" – to designate these lofty aims. According to this theory, the infrastructure (which is an expanded version of Marx's, and consists of technology, population, and the environment) determines the structure (which consists of class relations and political organization) which in turn determines the superstructure (which includes a society's shared beliefs, values, and rituals). Like Marx, Harris insisted that the infrastructure had a causal priority because it concerned those aspects of life that were about survival and reproduction. However, while Harris addressed relations of unequal power, he did not treat ideas as mere ideologies of the ruling class, but instead viewed them as adaptive components of the society at large, where changes in beliefs were examined according to how they benefitted the adaptation of the whole society. For Harris, human beliefs were relevant and important only so long as they were properly seen as component parts of a society's material structure. Only in their connection to the techno-environmental conditions could the belief "systems" of a people be amenable to scientific analysis.

Equally significant was Harris's (1977) claim that a progressive perspective of the evolution of societies was inconsistent with the realities of stratification and environmental depletion. Social evolution ought to be viewed instead as a panorama of humans periodically being compelled to introduce new technologies in response to declining living standards resulting from demographic pressures on scarce resources.

Progress was an illusion of the Western mindset; the introduction of new technologies, rather than improving the human condition, had resulted in harder and longer work to feed more mouths without improving the living standards of the vast majority of people. The Industrial Revolution did finally increase the quality of life but this improvement only came in the last two centuries, and its massive use of energy and the earth's finite resources were leading to another, far more dangerous, state of environmental depletion.

Harris's ideas would come to exercise widespread influence over the social sciences and the lay educated public. More than a few of his seventeen books would become best sellers including *Cows, Pigs, Wars, and Witches* (1975), and *Cannibals and Kings* (1977). Collectively his works would be translated into fourteen languages. His two college textbooks, *Culture, People, Nature: An Introduction to General Anthropology* and *Cultural Anthropology*, would reach seven editions each between 1971 and 1997. *The Rise of Anthropological Theory*, originally published in 1968, would be the beneficiary of multiple printings, with an "Updated Edition" released in 2001. Maxine Margolis informs us in the "Introduction" of this edition that "the Social Science Citation Index named it as a 'citation classic in 1991' " with over 1,000 journal citations (2001: viii–xvi)!

The Conversion of William McNeill: From "Rise of the West" to "Interactive Webs"

It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that the 1960s saw the onset of a tidal wave against the idea of progress. By the 1970s world historians had generally lost faith in Western civilization and the old liberal interpretation of the meaning and course of human history. The intellectual odyssey of William McNeill, possibly the most renowned world historian of our times, is quite revealing in this respect. In 1974 McNeill published his short book *The Shape of European History* (parts of which he had presented to a session of the Eleventh International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences in 1973) under the encouragement of Sol Tax, professor of anthropology at the University of Chicago. In this book, McNeill observed that "few living historians accept" the "no longer very convincing idea" that "Europe's history is the history of liberty" (1974: 3). In searching for another organizing vision that would give meaning to the whole of European history,

McNeill relied on the anthropological notion of "cultural pattern" which he defined as "repeatable behaviour recognizable in the lives of relatively large numbers of men, often millions or hundreds of millions" (24). This bland, featureless definition of culture was specifically set against the traditional emphasis on the elite culture of the West; it minimized rational patterns of behavior in support of unconscious behaviors performed by anonymous faces on a regular basis. This definition was well-suited to anthropologists who spent a good part of their research lives with peasants and tribesmen. When seen from the standpoint of the daily lives of ordinary people, European history did not appear particularly unique. If it still seemed "worthwhile" to study it, McNeill concluded, it was because of the predominant role of European industrial and military power in world affairs in recent centuries (176).

To be precise, McNeill has recollected that during the ten years when he was writing *The Rise of the West*, he was under the influence of the anthropologist Robert Redfield from whom he had learned that historical change was "largely provoked" by encounters between "separate civilizations."[19] Redfield, author of *The Primitive World and its Transformation* (1953) and *The Little Community, and Peasant Society and Culture* (1956), had indeed gained a reputation for his pioneering idea that seemingly isolated peasant villages, with their customs, religious beliefs, and standard of living, should not be studied as isolated units but as parts of a wider set of connections between many villages and states.[20] McNeill went so far as to argue in 1982 that "it is from [anthropologists] that I borrowed most of my conceptual baggage" (1986: 94).[21] It was from anthropologists indeed that McNeill learned to "escape the hampering ethnocentrism" of "contemporary American and European society" (54).[22] (I might add that he learned to challenge Western ethnocentrism from *Western-educated* anthropologists, not Confucian or Hindu anthropologists).

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[19] See McNeill, "The Changing Shape of World History," in Dunn, *New World History* (2000).

[20] Fifteen editions of *The Primitive World* were published between 1953 and 1989 in three languages; and nineteen editions of *Little Community* between 1956 and 1989 in three languages.

[21] "A Defence of World History," in *Mythistory and Other Essays* (1986).

[22] "The Rise of the West as a Long-Term Process," in *Mythistory and Other Essays* (1986).

It is no wonder that when the Western Civilization course was abandoned in the 1960s, McNeill did not grieve its disappearance, despite being a course teacher at the University of Chicago as well as the author of *History Handbook of Western Civilization* (1953). What he lamented, as he said in 1976 at an American Historical Association session, was the lack of development of a *new* required course that "all educated persons should know; something every active citizen ought to be familiar with in order to conduct his life well and perform public duties effectively" (97).[23] In this lecture McNeill left no doubt that for him world history was the most suitable survey to introduce American students to the great cultures and complex affairs of a world far greater than Europe. But if the Western Civilization view of history as the evolution of freedom was parochial and out of touch with the common folk, what would be the organizing vision of this new required world history course? It would be an amplification of the anthropological ideas McNeill had long been adopting combined with Wallerstein's world-system approach.

In the self-critical article, "The Changing Shape of World History" (1994), McNeill proudly explained how he had gradually come to accept a slightly revised version of Wallerstein's world-system analysis, together with a new environmental perspective that placed microparasites rather than European ideas at the center of global history. He felt he had not gone far enough in *The Rise of the West* in his emphasis on interaction between civilizations in that he had restricted them to geographical regions like the Near East rather than including the entire world. In writing *The Pursuit of Power* (1982) and researching the strong effects Chinese commercial expansion had on the European economy after 1000 AD, McNeill concluded "that a proper world history ought to focus *primarily* upon changes in the ecumenical world system" (148).[24] The very idea that civilizations were distinct cultural entities which, despite their interactions, could be appraised the same way an art critic evaluated styles of art was no longer tenable. The civilizations of the past were too "internally confused and contradictory" – "no single recognizable style of life" could be attributed to any of them" (148–49). Apparently, such styles as

[23] "Beyond Western Civilization: Rebuilding the Survey," in *Mythistory and Other Essays* (1986).

[24] "Changing Shape of World History," in Dunn ([1994] 2000).

Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, Mannerism, Baroque, Rococo, Neo-Classicism, Romanticism, Realism, Impressionism, Surrealism, Fauvism, Cubism, and Dadaism were not recognizable styles that could be attributed to the West; they were internally confused trends lacking historical merit.

In an earlier self-appraisal originally published in 1984,"The Rise of the West as a Long-Term Process," McNeill repeated with conviction that the "principal motor of social change within civilized and simpler societies alike" was "contact with strangers" (57).[25] Stability and repetition were normal; it was mostly "encounters" with other cultures that provoked "innovation." "Borrowing," however – not "invention" – was "the principal impetus to social change." The successive efflorescence of golden ages in world history, after the first in Mesopotamia (3000–1800 BC), "involved a preparatory period of large scale borrowing from more accomplished cultures…in the immediately preceding era" (62–3).

McNeill recognized that "such borrowed elements entered a distinct institutional and cultural setting" that affected their importance, but he did so incidentally in the context of persistently asserting that world history writing should be mostly about cross-cultural exchanges (63). He also insisted that world historians should concentrate on the everyday culture of the majority, in contrast to the old Western Civilization courses which had been too preoccupied with "elite culture." The high culture of the West, for all its accredited virtues, was immaterial to the vast majority: a civilization was "no more than a shorthand summation for myriads of messages exchanged among large populations" (64). Indeed, in a tone similar to Wallerstein, McNeill suggested in "The Changing Shape of World History" that the moral and religious patterns that distinguished a civilization's elite were in truth ideologies of oppression which the rulers themselves disregarded since their real interests were plundering, taxing, and reaping profits unjustly, although the principal religions of the core regions of the world system – Christianity, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Islam – did soften somewhat the suffering that accompanied the imperial subordination of less powerful cultures (148–9).

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[25] McNeill, "The Rise of the West as a Long-Term Process," in *Mythistory and Other Essays* (1986) This essay was reprinted again in 1990 in the inaugural issue of the *Journal of World History*.

McNeill also went on to claim that next to cultural exchanges, the environment was the most significant factor in world history. He had already focused on "infectious diseases" in *Plagues and Peoples* (1976), but in the 1980s and 1990s he came to the more sweeping observation that humans were effectively organic creatures conditioned by the forces of nature. Climate change, deforestation, pollution, and "ecological crises" were powerful forces inducing humans to alter their behavior, "thereby creating historical change and maintaining its momentum across the centuries."[26] The stuff of world history consisted in the communications carried by countless anonymous strangers across the globe in response to environmental pressures and opportunities. World history, he concluded in *The Human Web* (2003), co-authored with his son, was essentially the study of interactive webs of plants, animals, parasites, and "common everyday" humans. It was McNeill's hope that this new world history would "play a modest but useful part in facilitating a tolerable future for humanity."[27]

Cultural Relativism, Scientific Materialism, and Humanism Combined

As McNeill was revising his ideas, the author of world-system theory, Wallerstein, was busy writing essays (some of which appeared in his *Unthinking Social Sciences* in 1991) turning his critique of modern Western imperialism into a complete rejection of the assumptions underlying the concept of "development." According to Wallerstein, this concept, which social scientists inherited from the 19th century, was highly misleading and unacceptable because it falsified the dominant historical trend of the modern world. By definition, "development" explained change as a gradual unfolding of internal potentialities within societies or civilizations. It assumed, as McNeill noted elsewhere, that changes within civilizations were "autocatalytic." The main role in the dynamics of society, Wallerstein insisted, was played by

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[26] McNeill, "A Defense of World History," in *Mythistory and Other Essays* (1986: 76).

[27] The citation is from "The Changing Shape of World History" (157). *The Human Web,* widely adopted in courses, uses the metaphor of a web as a way of persuading students that the West is one community among hundreds equally linked to the world. See also McNeill's "An Emerging Consensus about World History?" in the inaugural issue of *World History Connected* (2003), an online journal available to readers across the world.

global factors and influences. The drive for change came from intersocietal contacts, competition, conflict, and conquest. Societies were *not* autonomous and did not evolve independently since they were primarily created by "world-scale processes." The concept of development also had to be abandoned because of its intimate association with progress and the idea that history moved forward in a positive direction. The later stages of the "world-system" could hardly be considered improvements over earlier stages, when egalitarian "mini-systems" prevailed. Given the egalitarian realities of primitive societies, in contra-distinction to the current realities of a world capitalist system in which wealthy Western nations lived off the work and resources of the poorer countries, "progress" could not but be treated as historically contingent and culturally relative (2001: 2, 65–79, 253–4).

It was only a matter of time before cultural relativism, cultural materialism, and world systems theory would be integrated into a cohesive vision that would come to displace altogether any notion of Western uniqueness and progress. This is what the sociologist Stephen Sanderson accomplished in a series of carefully argued books: *Social Evolutionism: A Critical Theory* (1990), *Social Transformations: A General Theory of Historical Development* (1995b), and a widely used textbook, *Macrosociology: An Introduction to Human Societies* (1988).[28] Calling his new synthesis "evolutionary materialism," Sanderson offered, I would say, three modifications to Harris's model: i) a broader definition of the term "stratification" so as to include racial/ethnic relations and gender roles; ii) a complete incorporation of Wallerstein's systems theory on the grounds that the rise of a capitalist mode of production on a global scale in the 16th century had introduced a totally new "economic" dynamic into history; and, iii) a complete reversal of the old progressive idea with the idea that "throughout most of world history social evolution [had been] largely regressive" (1995b: 336; 2005: 30).

The first modification was quite straightforward and involved a consideration of "comparative patterns of racial and ethnic stratification," and of "the gender division of labor and gender inequality" (1995a: 328–391). The second one conceptualized the work of Wallerstein as

[28] *Macrosociology* was later revised in 1991, 1995a, and then again in 1999. A recent shorter version with a new title (co-authored with a former student, Arthur Alderson) was published in 2005: *World Societies: The Evolution of Human Social Life*.

central to the study of social evolution throughout the world since the 16th century. The third modification included the verdict that throughout much of social evolution the material standard of living, the quality of work, and the degree of social equality had deteriorated for most of the people of the earth. Sanderson concluded that hunter-gatherer societies were the most progressive. Europe's high culture was irrelevant. While he recognized that with the rise of industrial capitalism the standard of living of advanced societies had improved, and that in recent decades some gains had been achieved in less developed countries, he added that the gap between developed and less developed countries had steadily widened. Sanderson did not deny that individual autonomy and freedom had increased in modern industrial societies as compared to agrarian civilizations, but he still insisted that hunting and gathering bands and horticultural tribes were "the truest democracies," and that primitive peoples enjoyed about the same if not greater individual freedom (1995b: 337–356).

Yet Sanderson, in what may be a fourth modification, also addressed the "limitations" of a "strict cultural relativist perspective" that was seemingly indifferent to the inhumane practices of certain cultures (1995a: 44). No doubt aware of the possibly that an idea of "regress," not to mention "progress," involved moral judgments about what was "regressive" or "progressive" (notwithstanding his "scientific" reliance on measurable criteria such as "quality of diet" and "quantity of work"), Sanderson suggested that cultures could be judged according to some "humanistic principle." Referring to the work of the anthropologist Elvin Hatch (1983), he thought that it might be possible to evaluate cultures according to their treatment of persons regarding matters like torture, war, repression and exploitation. This humanistic principle, he continued:

> also judges them in terms of how well they provide for the material existence of their members, that is, the extent to which people are free from poverty, malnutrition, disease, and the like. Beyond this consideration, cultures cannot really be meaningfully evaluated (1995a: 44).

This humanism, to be sure, was not a mere academic modification; it reflected a deep-seated moral discomfort among affluent Westerners with poverty, war, and capitalist competition. Implicit in this principle was the prioritization of the material well being and physical security of humans, and the supposition that one could only make "humanistic" judgments on matters connected to the economic and

bodily existence of humans. Beyond this realm – on such questions as degree of philosophical reflection, aesthetic refinement, or musical virtuosity – one could not make any meaningful cultural evaluations.

The importance of Sanderson's work lay less in its originality than in the synthetic manner in which it reflected, in varying degrees, some of the most influential currents in the Western academic world. In the public sphere, the worthiness of Western civilization would also come under great doubt. This is a subject addressed by Robert Nisbet's book, *History of the Idea of Progress*, published in 1980, just as these doubts were becoming clearly visible throughout society. For Nisbet, the idea of progress, as we shall see further below, had exerted a powerful influence on Western civilization since ancient times. But in the 1970s he saw widespread popular cynicism and animosity towards this idea and towards Western history in particular. Looking at a wide range of public, educational, and media trends, he could not but conclude that anti-Western sentiments had "grown and spread to not merely the large majority of intellectuals…but to many millions of other people in the West" (317). What were once solid sentiments about "the value and promise of Western civilization" had been "severely challenged by doubt and disillusionment, even outright hostility." Whereas only a few decades ago the teaching of Western history – its "great events, heroes, leaders, and prophets" – was a common subject from early grade school to college, by the 1970s the Western past had come to be derided as a long travail of follies, superstitions, and wars; as a field best left for specialists rather than high school students who would be better served with "social studies" and bits of information about current events and their sexuality. There was a growing attitude that the West, having "contaminated, corrupted, and despoiled other peoples of the world…should feel guilty, ashamed, and remorseful" (331). The result was that young people were growing up without any integrating myths and traditional symbols of Western culture, without any roots in a common past.

Nisbet observed other trends including a growing hostility toward economic growth, which translated into opposition against Western modernization, coupled with a rising scepticism regarding the ability of Western reason and science to provide us with value-free knowledge, a trend associated with a surge in the value of non-logical thinking, Third World naturalness, new age cults, and disregard for traditional standards. At the same time, Nisbet saw a growing narcissistic preoccupation with personal fulfillment; a generation lacking in

traditional supports and thus in serial need of movies, sports, drugs, and sex to avoid the boredom of a meaningless life.

Now, to be sure, modernity is an age of manifold currents, coexisting, coalescing, and counter-interacting with each other, with different origins, consequences, degrees of significance and tempo. Without denying that there was a visible trend in the 1970s toward the occult against scientific reasoning, it is my view that the combination of cultural relativism with a not-always-clearly articulated "scientific humanism" was one of the prevailing trends of the times. This combination is generally ignored because of its outwardly contradictory character. This is a mistake; cultural relativism does not necessarily entail a denial of the possibility of objective/universal knowledge. Boas was an advocate of the rigorous empirical collection of ethnographic data against the premature formulation of general laws. He was also a firm believer in the idea of a common humanity, and was driven by a humane desire to recognize the right of non-Western cultures to self-respect and self-determination against the ethnocentric self-aggrandizement of the West (Boas and Stocking 1974). There is, indeed, an unavoidable paradox contained in the very historical origins of cultural relativism, for its roots lie in the uniquely Western idea that there is a universal humanity. Starting with the Stoic cosmopolitan idea that each person is a member of a common cosmos, through to the Christian idea that all humans irrespective of local, ethnic or cultural origin were created by the same God, to the 16th century idea that humans have a "natural" rights-bearing disposition to life, liberty, and dignity, the West has long cultivated the notion of a universal humanity (Headley 2008). The anthropological concern with the humane treatment of primitive peoples can no more be disassociated from this uniquely Western history than the anthropological emphasis on the modern scientific study of primitive cultures.

If Westerners today show open-mindedness for the beliefs and practices of other peoples, it is because they are committed to the equal dignity and equal rights of all humans. It is true that some cultural relativists have insisted that the identities, values, and sciences of different cultures are ultimately incommensurable. They have displayed extreme scepticism towards the trans-cultural validity of Western "universal" concepts (Hollis and Lukes 1984). The celebrated anthropologist Clifford Geertz has emphasized the particular "frames of meaning" in which people everywhere, including Westerners, live out their lives. Humans, he has argued, grow up in "a system of inherited conceptions

expressed in symbolic forms by means of which [they] communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life" (1973: 89). These symbolic frames are different and yet equally valid and authentic in their own terms. However, it is my view that this preoccupation with the cultural meanings of others cannot be disassociated from the Western idea that all humans, including humans living in different cultural settings, should be treated with *equal* respect and *liberal*-mindedness. I also believe that the "scientific" prioritization of the material conditions of life has come together with the ideal that there is a common ecological humanity with basic needs and cultural lifestyles that should be studied in a humanistic-objective manner.[29]

The Exclusion of Sociobiology

The materialistic approach advocated by cultural relativists was so humanistic indeed that its proponents felt compelled to downplay the role of those genetic traits which seemed to obviate this outlook even though these traits could be seen as characteristic of a common species. The sociobiological perspective, as it came to be known primarily through the work of E. O. Wilson (1975), argued that during the course of their evolution humans had evolved certain genetic traits which *predisposed* them to certain social behaviors. These behaviors could not be

[29] For a cogent critique of Geertz's cultural relativism and how Geertz came to excitedly describe the burning of widows "as a spectacle of awesome beauty," see Windschuttle (2002). Geertz defended his relativism in a lecture before the American Anthropological Association in 1984, where he stated that his main worry was with Western "provincialism – the danger that our perceptions will be dulled, our intellects constricted, and our sympathies narrowed by the overlearned and overvalued acceptances of our own society". This lecture was published in *American Anthropologist* (1984) under the title "Anti-Anti Relativism." It never occurred to Geertz how it was that he, a Westerner, had learned to step out of his own provincialism. Rather, he would go on to defend (2000) his relativism by arguing that the "universal…principles that animate liberalism are not so self-evident to others, even serious and reasonable others, as they are to liberals" (258). Nowhere does he pause to reflect on questions such as: why western culture among all the ethnocentric cultures of the world has been asking these universal questions? Is not the emphasis on cultural pluralism a form of universalism that requires modes of reflective reasoning (metacultural, historical, and anthropological) that are/were unavailable in other cultures and that threaten/have threatened the particular traditions and standards of diverse cultures? Can Westerners defend their liberal values by tolerating values which negate these liberal values? Should Westerners be deprived of their own particular traditions in the name of the universal promotion of pluralism and diversity?

attributed *solely* to the conditioning of particular cultural environments. Now, to be sure, this is an extremely complex debate requiring deeper reflection than it is possible in a historiographical review. Nevertheless, we must grapple with this question, for as we will see in the course of this book the study of human nature is central to the proper understanding of the idea of progress *and* Western uniqueness. First, let us avoid simplifications. Cultural or evolutionary materialists do not argue, in the words of Harris, "that human beings are *not* genetically programmed to be predisposed toward certain behavioural specialties" (1980: 127). Likewise, sociobiologists do not deny that a whole range of cultural differences are based on learning and socialization rather than on genes.

The key disagreement is that, although evolutionary materialists have willingly acknowledged the obvious role of survival and reproduction, they have been unwilling to bring 'Darwinian' drives into their models of social *change*. They cannot accept the idea that there are innate drives within humans that may have played a vital role in the dynamics of social evolution. This is what Wilson set out to challenge in his book *On Human Nature* (1978). He observed a persistent tendency on the part of humans living in societies to form hierarchical relationships in which rivalry for status was of vital importance. He also noted the emergence of very similar institutions across a diverse landscape of evolving cultures: patriarchal leaders, division of labor, class stratification, legal codes, irrigated farming, and monumental architecture. Wilson then pondered how it would be possible to explain these common sets of social facts without taking into account the role of common genetic drives amongst the human species. How was it that otherwise independent cultures, in different ecological settings, had evolved the very similar institutions and practices in a roughly similar evolutionary sequence (88–9)? He further cited a long list of human traits and practices found in all human cultures: incest taboos, bodily adornment, myths, dancing, murder, suicide, education, hygiene, medicine, tool-making, marriage, and more (22). These social realities strongly suggested to him that certain human predispositions may have been at work in sociocultural evolution.

He further noted that aggression was a genetic trait of all mammals, including humans, and that the proof of this was the endemic presence of violence and warfare across all human cultures. Wilson proposed various categories of aggression, i.e., defence and conquest of territory, assertion of personal dominance, sexual aggression,

aggression against prey and against predators, and aggression to enforce social rules (101–02). He never argued that aggressiveness could be understood merely in terms of its innateness. Human traits had evolved as adaptations to the environment during millions of years of evolution. Those traits that gave individuals a better chance of survival were passed down through successful mating. The exact manner in which a people manifested aggression depended on the interaction with the environment and the previous cultural experience and history of the group (114).

One can raise a wide range of objections to the details and connections Wilson draws between human nature and social evolution.[30] I am nevertheless drawn to his general effort to bring human nature into social evolution as an active historical force in its own right. Alas, the same cultural materialists who enthusiastically adapted the ideas of technological and environmental determinism also rejected sociobiology for its "genetic determinism." The truth is that the findings of sociobiologists were excluded from social evolutionary models for political rather than scholarly reasons. Sanderson, to his credit, has made the same point. While sociobiology played "only a limited role" in his evolutionary materialism, he criticized the "exaggerated and extreme" dismissal of sociobiology by anthropologists and sociologists. He correctly noted that the disquiet with sociobiology stemmed primarily from the fact that its findings on stratification and aggression constituted a challenge to the "strong humanistic stance and social reformist tendencies" of many social scientists (1995a: 47–50). He defended the right of academics to intellectual freedom and rejected the claim than an emphasis on genes amounted to a justification of social injustices. He even agreed with sociobiologists that social phenomena such as homosexuality, gender roles, incest avoidance, and ethnocentricity were strongly rooted in our genetic make-up (2001: 120–144).

However, for all this, Sanderson's overall orientation was one in which sociobiological ideas were framed within, and thus kept under, a Marxist perspective (2001: 143–162). He particularly minimized the

[30] There is a tendency now to recognize the interacting complexities of both nurture and nature; for example, the evolution expert, Matt Ridley (2003) explains that different environments have different effects on the brain's chemistry, a process he calls "nature via nurture."

dynamic of human nature when it came to the explanation of transformations such as the origins of agriculture and stratification. He continued to insist that the major forces of social change were technological, demographic, environmental, and economic. He specifically emphasized the role of population pressure, and indeed assimilated Ester Boserup's (1981) argument that population growth was the most important force driving the evolution of societies from hunting and gathering all the way to agrarian civilizations. While he viewed technology as a key component of the infrastructure, he rejected the claim that it was a "self-generating force" propelling social evolution. The human species was *not naturally* predisposed to engage in the cumulative improvement of their technologies. The "natural inclination" of humans is to "make a living by the simplest and easiest means possible" (2005: 73). The agency of change comes from demography and the environment. Humans are not predisposed to be active in history; they are inclined to be passive.

Thus, in looking at the origins of agriculture, he combined Mark Cohen's argument (1977) with Boserup's to argue that agriculture was adopted when hunters and gatherers began to experience a "food crisis" due to population pressure. Foragers knew about farming long before they actually started farming but they preferred their way of life, which required less work than farming for the same or even a better standard of living. They only adopted farming when they were *compelled* to do so as the number of bands began to outpace the capacity of the environment to sustain hunting and gathering (1995b: 36–42).

Similarly, in looking at the origins of stratification as farming was adopted, Sanderson followed closely the "scarcity theory" articulated by Michael Harner (1975) among others. This theory explained that it was population pressure against scarce land that brought about unequal class relations. As farming was adopted, and food output increased, and population growth was simulated anew, and the availability of farming land decreased, some families came to display higher degrees of "selfishness" in the ownership of land, which in the end led to the emergence of private property and class stratification. He further argued that, as societies were gradually stratified, the members of the society with greater economic power went on to compel the others to work harder in order to produce economic surpluses (2005: 79–80). Humans were rational in the way they went about pursuing their survival strategies, but they were not, however, interested in self-maximization. Humans preferred to gain their subsistence with a

minimal amount of time and energy. Sanderson called this natural tendency the "Law of the Least Effort" (1995b: 342–3).

Sanderson was influenced enough by sociobiology to reject the romanticized ideals of Mead and others for whom the tendency of primitive peoples to share their resources was a "natural" disposition until they were somehow corrupted by the influences of private property. He explained that it was in the self-interest of hunter-gatherers to share their food because they were intimately dependent on one another for survival. Yet, as we saw above, Sanderson still argued that "increased selfishness" was an attitude created by population and resource pressures. He still idealized the distributive ethic and the sharing norms of hunters and gatherers and simple horticulturalists (1995a: 103). He could not envision how one could speak of "progress" in reference to the rise of stratification, repressive chiefs, hereditary right, money, competition, and harder work.

This minimization of the role of aggressive, competitive traits in the evolution of societies, combined with a humanitarian attitude on the part of the researchers towards the "distributive" ethic of early peoples, has been a powerful line of thinking among social scientists. It is also an attitude that has impaired the ability of academics to appreciate and explain the uniqueness of Western progress. Let me start explaining this point by drawing attention to a number of rather noticeable (or perhaps no so noticeable) slippages in Sanderson's logic. This slippage first occurs when he acknowledges, using the work of Elizabeth Cashdan (1980), that "powerful techniques of socialization" had to be imposed upon hunters and gatherers to restrict individuals with strong "human motivations" from seeking "to attain more than others" (2005: 42). It would seem that some individuals within the otherwise redistributive hunter-gatherers were genetically inclined to seek more than others. This slippage takes obvious, unhidden overtones in Sanderson's efforts to explain the rise of "extremely ambitious men" known as 'big men' in simple horticultural societies. Indeed, the appearance of these big men across the world, with the coming of simple horticultural farming, has always been a distressing question for the entire discipline of anthropology, sociology, and leftwing "critical thinking," for it challenges from the beginning the assumption that humans are naturally egalitarian.

Big men were individuals who sought a higher status by cultivating larger gardens and raising larger herds in order thereby to hold feasts for the villagers wherein they would redistribute large quantities of food.

This was not just a rare occurrence; in every village there were several men competing for the title of "big man," which meant that there were always plans and preparations for feasts. This competition also meant that there was considerable pressure for more and bigger feasts. No "big man" could rest on his laurels. The men who worked harder, consumed less, enlisted the support of more relatives, and held consistently larger feasts, would be generally accepted as the village "big man" (1995a: 129–132).

Harris has tried to explain (away) this psychological motivation by portraying the big man's behavior in terms of its "adaptive" role as an "economic intensifier" who increased the level of output beyond what it would otherwise have been for small-scale horticultural groups. In this explanation, the big man "functioned" as an intensifier who encouraged the village to increase production beyond the margins of subsistence, and thus created a safety net against seasonal fluctuations. What appeared like "puzzling" behavior in which men sought prestige as "an end in itself…wholly divorced from, and even directly opposed to, rational calculations of material costs" was really a rational adaptation to "material constraints and opportunities" (Harris 1975: 111). There is no question that this quest for prestige in the village provided important survival and evolutionary benefits to the village as a whole. This is why this behavior was accepted by the villagers. But, as some anthropologists have observed (Hayden 1995: 40), and as I shall explain further in chapter seven, feasts were public displays in which big men publicly announced the surpluses they gave away as "gifts" in order to create obligations towards him on the part of the recipients. It was publicly understood that the receiving individuals were obligated to match the gifts in a future feast and that, if feasters were not reciprocated accordingly, the recipients were obligated to pay in other ways. It was thus common for successful big men to accumulate several wives, more land, a larger pig herd, and a larger network of helpers.

In focusing on the distributive ethic of big men, Sanderson and Harris leave out completely the self-interested nature of feasting. I would argue, however, that there was more to feasting than the calculated pursuit of one's economic self-interest. The non-material, psychological benefits that came from being acclaimed as the "big man" of the village cannot be underestimated: higher deference, respect, desire for what the big man had attained, and admiration by others. I shall return to this question later on. Let me say now that the quest for one's self-interest and one's prestige were the driving forces behind the

enhancement of productivity and the evolution of society. As we shall soon see, the pursuit of economic success and prestige is innate to humans, but, at the same time, it is not a disposition that can be seen to be equalized among humans; not all men in the village were equally willing, conceited, and selfish to become big men.

Kant's "unsocial sociability"

Robert Wright, in his popular book, *Non-Zero, The Logic of Human Destiny* (2000) brings up the research findings of evolutionary psychologists who have absorbed the findings of sociobiologists to argue "that human beings naturally pursue social status with a certain ferocity. We all relentlessly, if often unconsciously, try to raise our standing by impressing peers." This drive for prestige has been "the impetus behind cultural evolution." Wright thus challenges the Rousseauite-Marxist idea that stratification, competition, and the pursuit of high status only emerged with the rise of an economic surplus and private ownership of resources. He also challenges what he calls the "equilibrium fallacy," which is the claim that societies change – as Harris and Sanderson argue – only when external forces compelled its inhabitants to change. While Wright acknowledges the obvious effects of environmental circumstances and demographic pressures on the rate of social change, he states rather bluntly that the "arrow of human history begins with the biology of human nature" (18–53). The struggle for status within societies, warfare between tribes, and the struggle against scarcity have been a common feature of all societies. Thus, while Wright admits that geographical conditions explain why agriculture, chiefdoms, and civilizations arose in some areas before others, he maintains that *ultimately* the *why* of social evolution, *and the "creative" progression of history*, is the "unsocial sociability" of human nature (68–77).

The term "unsocial sociability" comes from Immanuel Kant, and Wright employs it in support of his thesis that "there is a universal human nature" on "every continent" of the world. Wright highlights the "paradoxical" meaning of this Kantian term in the way it speaks of human greed and vanity as being responsible for the suffering and awfulness of historical change as well as its creativity. He cites Kant's well-known observation in the "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose" that without their "a social qualities," that is, without their desires for honor, property, and status, humans

> would live an Arcadian, pastoral existence of perfect concord, self sufficiency and mutual love. But all human talents would remain hidden forever in a dormant state, and men, as good-natured as the sheep they tended, would scarcely render their existence more valuable than that of their animals…[T]he end for which they were created, their rational nature, would be an unfulfilled void. Nature should thus be thanked for fostering social incompatibility, enviously competitive vanity, and insatiable desires for possession or even power (27–8)

Kant, I would add, was voicing a well-established idea in the Western canon.[31] A few decades before Kant, Turgot had written, in 1750, a short sketch on world history, which pointed as well to "self-interest, ambition, and vainglory" as the driving "mechanisms" of progress. Before Turgot, Giambattista Vico had pondered on the ways in which Providence seemed to have employed the avaricious passions of men in the creation of the very civil institutions that were indispensable for the advancement of civilized life.[32] We could indeed go deep into the Western past to find Christian thinkers such as Tertullian, Eusebius, and Origen all writing of human greed, pride, and aggression as inescapable components of historical improvement. It was with solemn eyes that these philosophers looked at the violent making of Rome's "perpetual peace" as an indispensable reality that made possible the spread of the Christian message of the "unity of mankind" (Dawson 1935).

Later I shall argue that the concept of "unsocial man" was articulated by Western philosophers out of the historical experience of the West's singular exhibition of a pattern of progression amidst much strife and aggression. In this respect, this term, even though it was

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[31] Kant's idea on the "unsocial sociability of men" is contained in his essay "An Idea For a Universal History From a Cosmopolitan Point of View," in *On History*, edited by Lewis White Beck (1963). For a short but competent discussion of Kant's essay see Collingwood (1975: 93–104).

[32] See Nisbet (1998: 161–62, 180). Nisbet shows awareness of the connections between these observations and Mandeville's "private vices, public benefits," Adam's Smith's "invisible hand," Kant's "unsocial sociability," and Hegel's "cunning of reason." Bury also makes reference to these terms (excepting Hegel's) but only superficially without a clear grasp of Kant's meaning, and without tying them to the idea of progress (1960: 156,178, 243). Nisbet makes more of these concepts; however, in his preoccupation with 20th century Marxists who would consciously advocate the use of violence to advance their "progressive" agendas, he confuses their intended meaning as if they were meant as a justification for violence rather than as thoughtful observations about the tragic way in which human achievement has come together with hardship and violence. I will get back to Kant and Hegel later on.

articulated as a universal principle, should not be seen as a universal principle detachable from the unique experience of the West. I shall also argue that the unsocial behavior of big men cannot be fully understood within the theoretical ambit of evolutionary psychology or sociobiology. The self-assertive longing for "prestige," "respect," and "fame" are no doubt genetically-based traits which evolved in response to long periods of adaptive selective pressures. But I will argue that the pursuit of prestige needs to be examined as a psychosomatic or mental disposition on the part of humans to achieve validation and recognition from other human beings. I will also argue that this disposition assumed a *heightened, more intensive* expression amongst the aristocratic culture of the Indo-European speakers who gradually infiltrated Europe after 4000 BC. The "noblest" ideal of Indo-European aristocratic warriors was the pursuit of prestige through the performance of heroic acts in proud contempt for one's biological survival.

The point I want to emphasize now is that the Western idea of progress is incompatible with the belief that human nature is "good" and that all change is for the best in this world. As we learn from Bernard Mandeville's provocative book *The Fable of the Bees* (1723), the innocence of manners of people living an Arcadian existence cannot be reconciled with the "worldly greatness" of civilizations. A society of people living peacefully in a friendly and easy style would be the safest and "happiest," but it would also be stagnant. The teaching of Western civilization, seen from this perspective, does not require that we leave out its deplorable aspects, but neither does it require that we ignore the ways in which this exceptionally agonistic culture cultivated religious tolerance, human rights, and science. The force that made progress possible in history, as Western thinkers long realized, was not some initial state of tranquility and goodness, but the "tumultuous and dangerous passions" of man. These were the passions that Christian theologians believed had brought an end to the mythical world of Adam and Eve. Humans were not rational and free at the beginning of history. As Hegel liked to remind his readers, God ratifies Satan's prophesy after Adam has eaten the forbidden fruit: "Look, Adam has become like one of us, and knows what is good and evil" (in Rosen 1974: 8). Adam and Eve were happy in paradise but they had not yet asked the *reason* why they were happy, what the good life was. They were not human, for they had not achieved anything, had not worked, and had not disciplined their basic instincts. Paradise is for beasts.

Nisbet thinks that the myth of a past 'Golden Age' characterized by peacefulness and happiness is inconsistent with the idea of progress since this myth would perforce require one to view all subsequent history in terms of decay and decline. Thus, in his effort to argue that ancients and Christians alike already held a conception of progress on earth – against J.B. Bury's (1932) classic statement that the whole notion of progress was strictly modern – Nisbet downplays ancient beliefs of a golden age. He argues that the ancients, by and large, saw the original condition of humanity as one of wickedness, ignorance, and scantiness. Nisbet manages to show (in part) that some ancient individuals did envision man's early condition as "brutish" and "barbarous." He does show as well that ancients sometimes wrote of historical stages marked by earlier times that were "simple" and impoverished as compared to later times that were stable and more advanced in knowledge. Still, I am not convinced that, for the Greeks and Romans, history exhibited a meaningful progressive pattern *leading to a future goal* in light of which events in the past could be seen. What Nisbet shows is that some contemporaneous Greeks had a sense of the superiority of their Athenian culture over other "barbaric" peoples living in primitive want. I agree with Bury, R.G. Collingwood (1975), and Karl Löwith (1949) that the Greek conception of history was ultimately periodic and repetitive. They – Herodotus, Thucydides, and Polybius – did not anticipate anything really new in the future; they generally held that it was "the nature of all things to grow as well as to decay."

The myth of a golden age is reasonably consistent with the idea of progress. The myth that there was once a golden age, which gave way to strife and hardship, expresses the realization that the noblest accomplishments of humanity are fatefully connected with turmoil, suffering, and vanity. It is interesting that the very first instance in which Nisbet (6-18) detects the idea of progress in Greek times is in reference to the legend of Pandora's Box, which suggested that all the evils of the world originated in Pandora's *desire to know* the contents of the box she had been prohibited to open. When she did open the chest, as the myth tells us, the insects of avarice, cupidity, cruelty, and conflict flew out. Pandora had belonged to the first mortals on earth who lived in a state of perfect innocence and bliss. Hunger and death were unknown; the gods had forbidden her to open the box, but she refused to comply in that "she *had* to know what was in the box" (Hamilton 1969: 70). Without getting into some of the conflicting interpretations of this myth, it can be reasonably said that a suggested

meaning of this myth is that the pursuit of knowledge constitutes an act of defiance signaling a loss of innocence and childhood contentment. Moving beyond a state of eternal tranquility, and exercising one's faculties, necessarily entails certain human dispositions: rebelliousness, daring, risk-taking, or what Kant called the "unsocial sociability" of human nature.

Progress and the State of Nature

The Rousseauite image of a naturally good humanity (Montagu 1976: 164–80) living harmoniously and enjoying a relatively "affluent" lifestyle has little historical support. Much of the recent research now points to the conclusion that hunters and gatherers, as well as simple horticulturalists, were living in a violent state of nature. Azar Gat, in his outstanding book, *War and Civilization* (2007), conveniently analyses this research. He argues that Hobbes was closer to the truth than Rousseau in his argument that "the human 'state of nature' was one of endemic 'warre', murderous feuds for gain, safety, and reputation, a war of every man against every man, which made life 'poore, nasty, brutish, and short' " (5).

Marshall Sahlins's essay, "The Original Affluent Society" (1974), which argued that hunter-gatherers had more leisure and a healthier diet than agriculturalists, is regularly cited by anthropologists as a refutation of the Hobbesian view that early humans were in a continual struggle to scratch a bare subsistence from nature. Lest there is any confusion, Hobbes's "imaginary" condition of the state of primitive life was not simply that life was harsh because of its undeveloped state. It was that, in a world in which each and everyone was free to decide for himself how to conduct his life and resolve disputes, each would inevitably be in a state of constant bickering and warfare. Hobbes knew that "there was never such a time" (1988: 187) in which the world was populated by isolated individuals warring each other. Nevertheless, he gave three examples in which humans approximated a state of nature: i) that of all sovereign states in respect to their international relations; ii) that of formerly peaceful states in a state of civil war; and iii) that of "the savage people in many places of America" living in "small families" without a sovereign authority (187).

Hobbes has been persistently criticized for describing the state of nature as if it was made up of isolated individuals, but this is

inaccurate. Of course, his account of the "savage people" is clearly insufficient as it was based on the scanty anthropological reports of his time. But this should not impugn the value of Hobbes's main point, which is that the question of conflict resolution in early societies was fragilely dispersed over many competing leaders and kinship groups. Societies lacking in centralized rule in the form of codified law, police, and diplomatic treaties, were more likely to experience continuous and prolonged intergroup feuds and killings.

During the last decades anthropologists and sociologists have generally believed that inter-group warfare made its appearance only after the emergence of "selfish" ruling classes. As Mead famously entitled one of her essays, "warfare is only an invention – not a biological necessity" (1940). Some scholars did acknowledge that warfare existed among a number of hunting and gathering societies, but they argued nonetheless that it "increased substantially during the horticultural era" (Lenski and Nolan 1995: 132). While Harris paid attention to the "unusual" warlike behavior of Yanamamo men living in simple horticultural cultures, he accounted for this behavior in terms of its adaptive function. It was a rather forced explanation: the Yanamamo engaged in war because this violent behavior functionally worked to encourage them to concentrate their scarce resources on the raising of future boy warriors by practicing girl infanticide, which provided an overall check on population pressure and, in turn, increased their adaptability (1974: 75–80).

There is no need to appeal to this type of contrived explanation. Hunting and gathering societies experienced conflict over a wide range of issues related to scarce resources and the self-interested drives of humans over such matters as territorial rights, marriage arrangements, and restitution for past grievances. Fierce raids were common. These raids were not allowed to escalate into full-scale battles, or into wars of conquest, because hunters and gatherers had no use for more land and slaves, and because the loss of too many men could easily threaten the survival of the remaining members in the band (Snooks 1996: 271). The sociobiological or Darwinian argument is not that all humans are inevitably driven to act violently, and that all hunting and gathering societies have always been similarly warlike. Aggression is in our genes, "but only as a skill, potential, propensity, or predisposition" (Gat: 39). It is a "basic and central skill" of the human species which was selected over many millions of years of evolution as a very successful *option* in the struggle for survival.

Gat thinks that competition for resources and reproduction is the primary cause of aggression. Humans tend to propagate rapidly when resources are abundant, and so population pressure and competition tend to be the norm in nature. But this does not mean that human competition *per se* is a creation of the environment. Scarce resources may intensify the competition but humans, according to Gat, are still predisposed to maximize their reproductive chances and increase their competitive advantages. Territorial disputes and raiding expeditions against other bands or tribes were actually common even in low population density areas with rich ecological niches. Gat observes that "across the whole range of hunter-gatherer societies, from the simplest to the most complex," lethal raiding, abduction of women, and blood feuds were widespread (11–35). He calculates that, on average, "human violent mortality rates among adults in the state of nature may have been in the order of 15 percent (25 percent for the men)" – a percentage higher than for advanced civilizations even during such devastating periods of warfare as the Second Punic War (218–202 BC), the Thirty Years War (1618–48), the First World War, and the Second World War (Gat: 131–2)!

What humanitarian materialists have ignored – in their emotional attachment to the "sharing and generosity" of primitive peoples – is that the rise of chiefly authority and the monopolization of force by states "promote[d] happiness," to use the words of Jared Diamond, "by maintaining public order and curbing violence"(1999: 277). Diamond, a geographical determinist with strong sympathies for primitive lifestyles, correctly recognizes that the maintenance of order and the settling of disputes is "a big underappreciated advantage of centralized societies over noncentralized ones" (277). One could go further and argue that the energies that had hitherto been expended in prolonged bloody feuds could now be redirected – after the consolidation of authority at the top – against other peoples in the pursuit of conquest and glory. The worldly success, the empire-making, the grandeur we associate with Egypt, Babylonia, and Persia, would have been a historical impossibility in the state of nature. The expansion, refinement, and enrichment of man's distinctive intellectual capacities, the realization of the potentialities of brain power developed by biological evolution, would have remained hidden without the rise of stratification, elites, and the invention of writing.

However, apart from the curbing of intra-tribal violence, Diamond does not see much that was worthwhile in the rise of states and

civilization. He literally dismisses the high culture of civilizations as irrelevant. Much like the relativists and humanitarian materialists we have examined, he believes that the essential, worthwhile facts of life revolve around survival and ecological adaptation. Cultural differences are no more than adaptations to different ecological settings. Diamond has even argued that agriculture itself, was "the worst mistake in the history of the human race"; only an elite "became better off but most people became worse off" (1987).

> As for the claim that agriculture encouraged the flowering of art by providing us with leisure, modern hunter-gatherers have at least as much free time as do farmers. The whole emphasis on leisure time as a critical factor seems to me misguided. Gorillas have had ample free time to build their own Parthenon [sic], had they wanted to. While post-agricultural technological advances did make new art forms possible and preservation of art easier, great paintings and sculptures were already being produced by hunter-gatherers 15,000 years ago, and were still produced as recently as the last century by such hunter-gatherers as some Inuit and the Indians of the Pacific Northwest (1987).[33]

Dynamic Man versus Reactive Man

Should we be surprised that Diamond's assessment of Europe's uniqueness in comparison to the Americas is only about its lethal diseases and weapons? In his remarkably successful book, *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (1997), he contends that the ultimate causes for the faster rate of development of the Eurasian continent in relation to the other continents were the greater availability of potentially domesticable species and a

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[33] Diamond clearly misses the key advantage of "progress" seen from a Hobbesian perspective:
"In such a condition [state of nature], there is no place for Industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no Culture of the Earth; no Navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by Sea; no commodious Building; no Instruments of moving, and removing such things as require much force; no Knowledge of the face of the Earth; no account of Time; no Arts; no Letters; no Society" (Hobbes 1988: 186). The idea of progress contains many inherent dilemmas, starting with the never-to-be-settled quarrel between "the ancients and the moderns" over progress in the arts (Bury 1960: 78–97). I will avoid this dilemma, and argue instead in favor of the progressive character of liberal democratic values in chapter five. I will also suggest in chapter six and in general throughout this book that Europe was the most progressive civilization because it generated the richest, the highest, and the most dynamic cultural tradition humanity has ever known.

geography conducive to the diffusion of useful species. He further argues, though in far less detail, that Europe's advantage over China within the Eurasian landmass lay in its geographical fragmentation in contrast to China's open spaces, which made centralization early on in its history possible, whereas Europe's division resulted in the generation of a highly competitive inter-state system which promoted technological innovations and the pursuit of power. I will address this argument later.

What I wish to emphasize now is Diamond's own cultural relativism and humanitarian (scientific) materialism. He is an evolutionary biologist who thinks that history can be made into a science with the proper employment of fields like molecular biology, geography, behavioral ecology, epidemiology and archeology. Yet, despite his reliance on evolutionary theory, he thoroughly deactivates the competition between life forms for scarce resources. While he recognizes natural differences in personality, intelligence, and fighting skills amongst hunting bands and simple horticulturalists, these qualities are neutralized in his account of the origins of stratification (1997: 265–270). To him the rise of agriculture was the unintended consequence of countless small actions taken in response to population pressures and ecological constraints (104–113). Much as in Harris and Sanderson, hunting and gathering societies are conceived as being in a state of homeostatic equilibrium until they are interrupted by environmental and demographic pressures. He does not pay attention to the economic role of ambitious men striving for prestige.

I think it makes more sense to argue that *before* there were any big men, before farming, there were already "selfish" human dispositions. I agree with Graeme Snooks that the "intense" desire for survival and "the competitive struggle to do so in a world of scarce resources" has always been a "naturally" existing energy in the evolution of societies (1996: 70). According to Snooks, organisms are striving at all times to survive and to maximize their competitive advantages. There is "a tenacious force within all life forms to survive" (2) "in a highly competitive environment…of finite resources" (86). Snooks may be too extreme when he occasionally writes "of the insatiable desire to accumulate material possessions" (173), but he offers, in my estimation, a healthy counter-balance to the currently influential idea, popularly articulated by Stephen J. Gould (1994), that human and social evolution has been driven by exogenous forces such as massive volcanic eruptions, major climatic changes, asteroid impacts, and diseases.

There is no denying that organisms and humans are randomly and continuously impacted by exogenous forces and conditions, but we should not lose sight of the "active" human side. Humans are the ones who explore "strategic opportunities on a daily basis in order to gain better access to natural resources" (Snooks 2005). Over the course of history, according to Snooks, humans have employed four major strategies: a family multiplication strategy, a conquest strategy, a market-competitive strategy, and a technological-innovative strategy. To take the procreation/family multiplication strategy for now, he argues that this was the principal strategy that hunters and gatherers employed to improve their survival chances and to propagate their genes. In this sense, he does not view population pressure as an external force recurrently compelling humans to act in certain ways. He sees population itself as the outcome of individual/group strategic thinking. Humans are capable of making choices about the best ways in which to ensure their well being. Foraging individuals had the option of following either a family multiplication strategy or a population control strategy. When there were unused resources available, Snooks observes, infanticide was consciously limited, thereby allowing family members to increase, breakaway families to emerge, and new bands to multiply into new territories. Among the beneficiary effects of this strategy, Snooks lists greater access to resources through kinship networks, more hunter/warriors to assist in raiding expeditions, and greater extension of one's tribal/ethnic influence (1996: 231).

Hunters and gatherers were not passive characters living in a state of equilibrium only to be forced by "external" population pressures to adopt new strategies. Human fertility is undoubtedly influenced by marriage patterns, migration, mortality rates, immunity against disease, and environmental constraints. But these "external" factors should not distract us from the driving procreative energies of humans and their rational utilization of these energies to augment their advantages. From about 50,000 years ago to about 10,600 years ago, the global human population increased four times. This strategically-induced increase, combined with the hunting efficiency of hunters, played a role in the extinction of big game: for example, between 17,000 and 10,000 years ago, Europe witnessed the extinction of the woolly mammoth, the woolly rhino, the musk ox, the steppe bison, and the giant Irish elk (1996: 51). This reality persuaded humans to engage in food production and to develop other competitive strategies for survival.

Snooks's work, however, needs to be supplemented by more empirically-oriented historical accounts. Peter Bogucki's *The Origins of Human Society* (1999) synthesizes recent findings and interpretive issues in world prehistory, bringing archeologically-based insights into a book written in the grand overview tradition of classical evolutionary theory. The argument he advances, plainly stated, is that among hunting and gathering societies there were already present ambitious individuals who wanted to enhance their self-interest. He borrows this idea from Brian Hayden (1995), whom I cited earlier in reference to the "self-interested" behavior of big men. He draws from J. E. Clark and M. Blake (1989) the term "aggrandizer" to refer to any ambitious and aggressive individual striving to achieve a higher status by economic means. Hayden is quite explicit in asserting that individual self-interest is "the ultimate determining force behind human behavior" (23). This is an assumption that is at the base of all evolutionary or sociobiological models. This is not to say that all humans are uniformly wired to maximize their self-interest. Rather, being self-interested is a central aspect of our human nature, which manifests itself in different ways across history, and to a higher degree among some individuals.

These "individual aggrandizers" were kept in check during much of the hunting and gathering era. They were given freer rein only when it became possible to pursue one's self-interest without threatening the survival chances of the villagers. Bogucki follows this line of reasoning to argue, in his case study of Europe, that until about 12,000 years ago Paleolithic bands kept these individuals in check insofar as it was in the survival interests of everyone to enforce strong sharing norms. But with the end of the Ice Age, new opportunities were created through a prolonged sequence of ecological changes (127–159). Essentially, these new environmental conditions came to function as incubators for individual aggrandizers who were finally afforded with opportunities to emerge as major agents of social change (209). Rather than speaking in terms of demographic and ecological "laws of nature," Bogucki argues that these new conditions made it possible for these individuals to make their own choices, improve their own lives, and accumulate more resources.

He envisions a situation in which individual households increasingly acted independently of the collective band-units, each making their own decisions regarding the acquisition of resources, property, favors, and obligations, with differential degrees of success. Given the

natural inequalities between households operating under competitive conditions (in a world of scarce resources, random risks and uncertainties) the long term outcome of such autonomous choices was the emergence of ranked tribal organizations. Bogucki avoids a "free market" image (in which some individual households would have emerged to the top by racing ahead of the others) by observing that inequality could have emerged gradually as some households dropped below a particular material baseline, while a few remained at the original level. The more successful ones – the ones with the more enterprising individuals – could thus be envisioned as consolidating and perpetuating their relative gains. As this process unfolded, the norms for cooperative sharing were further eroded, which in turn augmented inter-household competition. According to Bogucki, by the late Neolithic Era, over the period 4000–2000 BC, Europe had undergone a "remarkable transformation" as "transegalitarian" or "ranking" tribal groups came to emerge throughout the continent, with households competing for status and prestige, and their differences becoming progressively greater, leading eventually to the formation of chiefdoms and rigid hierarchies.

Steven Mithen, an archeologist of Europe who specializes in the "Mesolithic" period (12,000–7,000 BC) – situated between the Upper Paleolithic and the Neolithic periods – believes that even prior to the rise of "big men" in Neolithic societies there were already signs of "intense competition" amongst complex foragers. He thinks that this competition "may have been the motor behind the innovation of new technology that allowed additional resources to be exploited so that surpluses could be created" (2002: 133). The use of pottery, sedentism, and ranking were once believed to have emerged with farming. Mithen, however, notes that these phenomena were generated during the Mesolithic era, "one of the most critical periods in European prehistory" (79). This period saw not only the end of egalitarian relations and the rise of ambitious households, but also the rise of a ranked society combined with incipient agriculture. Like Bogucki, he ties these changes to a whole sequence of environmental changes, to which I would add the end of the final cold spell known as the Younger Dryas (which lasted from about 10,800 until 9,600 BC) and with it the resulting dramatic spread of vegetation, and the migration and availability of animals. These social changes included an "immense diversification" of microlith technology, extensive use of organic materials for the manufacture of tools (93–98), substantial dwellings with numerous

pits and features representing storage, fishing techniques indicating that marine resources were being "systematically exploited," domesticated dogs and techniques such as burning, weeding, and irrigation suggesting the beginnings of cultivation and a sedentary lifestyle (100–111).

Mithen portrays Mesolithic foragers as extremely knowledgeable and flexible individuals, continually making decisions from a "cost-benefit-risk perspective" (118). The marked variability in the quantity and quality of grave items suggests that the "first ranked societies of Europe appeared during the Mesolithic" (125). In addition to the "natural" distinctions of age, sex, and personality that were evident in egalitarian societies, there were new hereditary and property distinctions. These were not cultures living in a state of equilibrium waiting to be pushed into stratified relations by population pressures: "the Mesolithic was not a period of stasis in European history; rather it was a time of considerable socio-economic change" (132). Clearly, as Mithen recognizes, the intensification of economic practices brought increases in population densities and thus pressures upon land resources. These pressures, in turn, forced foragers to further diversify and improve their subsistence base, leading to the establishment of social boundaries and territoriality, and ranking and competition for status and power.

"The characterization of human beings as passive agents in life," writes Snooks, "is widespread…in the sciences and humanities" (138). I could not agree more. "Egoistic" individuals were not created *ex nihilo* by population pressures or by new technologies able to produce an "economic surplus." Such characters were already there, waiting, so to speak, for the right opportunity to pursue their own self-interested strategies. But I believe that Snooks, Hayden, Bogucki, and Gat are still reductionist in their understanding of human nature. Humans are not activated only in the pursuance of dynamic "materialist" strategies. They also have a desire to compete for prestige and this desire should not be equated with the desire to maximize one's material advantages. Gat acknowledges that the pursuit of social esteem "mattered a great deal," even in societies with strong sharing norms (88). Yet he thinks that this desire is ultimately rooted in what he calls "first level" somatic and reproductive drives, and that it should, accordingly, be explained in Darwinian terms as a desire intended to advance the material-biological advantages of individuals and tribal associations. In other words, he thinks that the quest for prestige is ultimately a derivative

psychological trait of what is a genetically generated disposition at the service of "first level" drives. This reductionist logic can be found in Snooks and Bogucki as well, even though they employ the language of economic maximization and "decision-making" individuals. Mithen likewise takes it for granted that the pursuit of status is synonymous with the acquisition of greater economic resources.

I will start to argue in chapter six, and furthermore in chapter seven, that the desire for prestige should be understood in psychosomatic rather than biological terms. Materially speaking, the desire for recognition is almost literally over "nothing." It is a desire to be desired by others. St. Augustine observed this in his *Confessions* when he analyzed competition in sports and wondered whether the only object won in these contests was the immaterial prestige gained through having others admire one's victory. I will follow Hegel in arguing that the desire for recognition, not the pursuit of one's evolutionary advantage, is *the* quintessentially human desire. This desire can be so overwhelming that one is prepared to fight to the death for it – to risk one's biological life and one's economic happiness to satisfy a non-biological desire. I will dwell on this point by drawing on Alexandre Kojeve's interpretation of Hegel's own take on the "state of nature" as a "fight to the death for pure prestige". I will suggest that the Indo-European speakers who began to migrate into Europe roughly after 3500 BC, coalescing with and subordinating the "ranked" Neolithic cultures of this region, were a uniquely aristocratic people dominated by emerging chieftains for whom fighting to gain prestige was the all-pervading ethos. This culture will be interpreted as "the Western state of nature" and as the primordial source of Western restlessness.

The Ascendancy of Multicultural World Historians

Tracing the full flowering of cultural relativism, its interconnections with scientific humanism, post-modernism, feminism, identity politics, and "dead white European males," along with the coming of new academic disciplines such as international studies, post-colonial studies, and Asian studies, not to mention the increasing proportion of citizens in Western countries claiming as their ethnic background "Chinese," "South-Asian," "Black," "Arab/West Asian," "Filipino," "Southeast Asian," "Latin American," "Japanese," "Korean,"

or "Other," is a subject beyond the scope of this chapter.[34] One thing, however, is certain: the attack against the idea of progress and the high culture of Western civilization coincided with the growth of world history courses in high schools, colleges, and universities across the United States. World history curricula gained momentum in the 1980s and 1990s by repudiating the very idea of "the West" as a unique civilization. Ross Dunn, Jerry Bentley, Patrick Manning, David Christian, and many others who took over the cause of world history in the 1980s, promoted countless college programs, and founded the World History Association (1982), the *World History Bulletin* (1983), the *Journal of World History* (1990), the H-World Network, and the online journal *World History Connected* (2003), all came to the conclusion that the

[34] A fuller study of the truly sweeping character of these intellectual currents would have to include the "postcolonial" school engendered by Edward Said after the publication of his best-seller *Orientalism* (1978). This book offered an "adversarial critique" of the "essentialized" way European artists, travelers, and writers had portrayed non-Western cultures as the "Other" (illogical and despotic) of everything that was thought to be progressive (rational and liberal) about the West. It would also have to include a study of the extremely influential *Annales* School Even as I have recognized Braudel's appreciation of Europe's high culture; one can hardly underestimate the role of his slow moving vision of history. When Emmanuel LeRoy Ladurie (1981), a prominent member of the *Annales* School, declared that the most solid feature of early modern Europe was its "immobility" he was riding a wave of research that would soon see the once celebrated revolutions of this era as contingent events which hardly affected the deep structures of ordinary life. For all the "great" events and personalities – this School argued – the "great mass of people" continued to live just as always within the constraints of agrarian stagnation, inert mentalities, and political servitude. This is how Braudel put it: "within the European sphere, there is an economic system which can be set down in a few lines; it preserved its position pretty well intact from the fourteenth to the eighteenth century or to be quite sure of our ground, until about 1750. For whole centuries, economic activity was dependent on demographically fragile populations, as was demonstrated by the great decline in population from 1350 to 1450, and of course from 1630 to 1730" (1980: 32). How did these two historians evaluate the history of ideas, the highest ideas of the spirit? We know they spoke of it as a history of the short time span, of events and individualities. What is less known is that they tended to see the history of ideas as "events" only when these ideas were somehow outside the established normative and folksy structures. They actually spoke of economic and demographic accidents and events (a fire, a railway crash, a sudden jump in the price of wheat). If they could not frame an idea or individual thinker within a slow changing *mentalité*, then the idea/thinker was relegated to an "accidental event." LeRoy Ladurie does "not deny that all such episodes" – "whether Newton's theories, Pascal's mystic experience, Papin's cooking pot…the spread of polite manners symbolized by the use of forks at table" – represented "something radically new," but he still thinks that these were significant "only in the history of a conspicuous minority" (1981: 24–25). One could also mention the "History from Below" school initiated by Georges Lefebvre, Albert Soboul, and George Rudé, the supervisor of my MA thesis on the origins of the French Revolution.

great events of European history could only be explained within the wider context of world history. The "West" did not exist except by reference to the "World". Whether they called their approach "big history," "world-system history," "world history connected," or "historyforusall," they agreed that all large-scale historical transformations should never be attributed to intra-civilizational processes and foundational traits. Understanding what had happened in any "part" of the world-system required understanding what had happened simultaneously in other parts of that system. World history was the study of past "connections in the human community," the story of humanity's "common experience." Some, like Bentley (1993) and A.G. Frank (1993), reached backward in time using Wallerstein's world-system approach by emphasising mass migrations, imperial links, and long-distance trade in pre-modern times. Others, like Clive Ponting (1991) and David Christian (2005), pointed to the common physical and biological nature of humanity, the universal ecosystem of the earth, Gaia, and the ways in which people have been interdependent with all other forms of life. If Dunn (1990) focused on trans-hemispheric intercommunicating zones, Alfred Crosby (1994) illustrated the ways in which plants, animals, and germs moved across continents beyond the boundaries of nations and civilizations.

There is no denying that this emphasis on the historical interactions of communities and cultures produced indispensable insights on the global impact of modern as well as pre-modern forces and movements. The trend toward a more even-handed evaluation of non-European peoples, initiated by *Western* scholars in the first half of the 20th century, deserves to be acknowledged. It is, after all, a trend in character with the ideals of human rights and dignity advanced by European civilization. Yet, it is difficult to deny that much of world history writing in the last decades has been dominated by a blinkered anti-Western perspective, one which no longer finds singular expression in overzealous books like Kete Molefi Asante's *The Afrocentric Idea* (1987), or in radical Marxist accounts like Louis Althusser's celebrated *For Marx* (1965) and *Reading Capital* (1968).[35] Happily ensconced within a world

[35] Herman's *The Idea of Decline in Western History* (1997) contains highly informative chapters on the Afrocentrist movement, including chapters on "the Frankfurt School and Herbert Marcuse," "Sartre, Foucault, Fanon," "the Multicultural Impulse," and "Eco-Pessimism." Although the chapter on multiculturalism examines the writings of Afrocentrics and critics of American culture, Herman does not examine the

of like-minded academics, backed by multiple grants and prestigious titles, this "critical" orthodoxy comes in seemingly objective and temperate writings, including the earlier mentioned "Shapes of World History in Twentieth Century Scholarship" by Jerry Bentley, professor of world history at the University of Hawaii, founding editor of the *Journal of World History*, and co-author of the widely popular college text *Traditions and Encounters*: *A Global Perspective on the Past* (1999).

Bentley's essay may be read as a fair treatment of the unfolding of world history as a "professional" field of study in the second half of the 20th century. He does not make the predictable attacks of world-system theorists against the "modernization school of history," but recognizes that Walt Rostow, Cyril Black, and Richard Bendix "made contributions of large significance." He also pays attention to reappraisals by modernization historians such as Jones, who came to revaluate the earlier "ethnocentric assumption" that intensive economic growth was a peculiarly Western phenomenon, and recognizes that Jones placed the "European experience in [a] global context by comparing it with those of other societies" (9–13).

In the end, Bentley's ideological intentions become apparent. His statement that "world history represents a particularly appropriate means of recognizing the contributions of all peoples to the world's common history" sounds benign (4–5). Why reject a conception of world history calling for the inclusion of the achievements of all peoples? Because what Bentley actually promotes is not simply the positive idea that the world's peoples deserve serious consideration but primarily the negative idea that there was nothing distinctive about classical Greece, the European Renaissance, the Reformation, the Glorious

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role of anthropological relativists. He draws attention to admirers of Third World customs but without speaking of "dependency" theory or world-system analysis. Still, he offers a captivating account of Arthur de Gobineau, Cesare Lombroso, Henry Adams, Marcus Garvey, Arnold Toynbee, and many other influential figures from the 19th and the first half of the 20th century. Herman thinks that Marxists, multiculturalists, postmodernists, and radical environmentalists shared "the same contempt for the liberal, rational traditions of post-Enlightenment Europe," as Nietzsche, Oswald Spengler, and Heidegger (446). This judgment ignores certain conservative thinkers (Jacob Burckhardt, Tocqueville, Weber, and T.S. Eliot) who were certainly not against the intellectual legacy of the West, but did warn against a purely hedonistic democratic instrumentalism with no sense of community, religion, and respect for the past. I would also say that Nietzsche, Spengler, and Heidegger, unlike many on the left who came to embrace popular and non-European cultures, were aristocratic elitists who dearly valued the high culture of Europe.

Revolution and Parliamentary supremacy, or the Enlightenment. While Bentley chastises world-system theory for focusing too much "on the interests and activities of Western capitalists" and for overlooking "the roles played by peoples in the satellite or periphery as participants in the making of the world's history," he endorses its basic tenets (16).

Nearly all the world history books produced during the 1980s and early 1990s that Bentley examines focus on how Europeans came to establish economic, cultural, and ecological hegemony over the world and how non-European cultures sometimes "succumbed" to European "numbers, weapons, and disease" but occasionally fought heroically against European "deculturation." Among his favourites is Daniel Headrick's three-volume *Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century*; *The Tentacles of Progress: Technology Transfer in the Age of Imperialism, 1850–1940*; and *The Invisible Weapon: Telecommunications and International Politics, 1851–1945*. He says of these volumes that they "explore the technological dimension of European imperialism….how Europeans rapidly extended their influence throughout the world during the age of the new imperialism" (19). Even books on the history of tiny islands, informed by ethnographic insights such as Greg Dening's *Islands and Beaches: Discourses on a Silent Land: Marquesas, 1774–1880* (1988) and David Hanlon's *Upon a Stone Altar: A History of the Island of Pohnpei to 1890* (1988), are celebrated as "world histories" insomuch as they discuss how "Europeans approached the islands in large numbers equipped with firearms, alcohol, and exotic diseases," and how the cultures of these islands were destroyed by white settlements, weapons, and diseases (25). Works on the indigenous peoples of North America are also listed as insightful studies of a hemispheric encounter that "brought demographic collapse, ecological imbalance, dependence on trade goods from abroad, heightened intertribal tensions, psychological despair, alcoholism, and deculturation" (26).

Bentley is hardly unique. Ross Dunn has observed that when the first volume of Wallerstein's *The Modern World-System* was published in 1974 it "excited" many historians who were just beginning to promote world history courses on college campuses.[36] At first, not everyone was

[36] Dunn, *The New World History* (225). I recommend this collection as the most appropriate introduction to trends in world history in the last three decades.

sure how to apply Wallerstein's analysis of the origins and dynamics of the modern capitalist system to global developments before 1500 CE. When in 1981 Craig Lockard wrote "Global History, Modernization, and the World-System Approach," he opined that it was "the most exciting and influential" approach for global historians seeking to explain trans-continental developments, but that it had not yet "penetrated the pages of world history textbooks" (233–8). By the late 1980s, however, after scholars had found enough time to improve, revise, and enlarge on Wallerstein, his concept of "world-system," according to Dunn, proved to be a "multifunctional tool" used to comprehend all sorts of interactions and exchanges throughout the world even in pre-modern times (226).[37]

Patrick Manning: It Takes an African Village to Write World History

Patrick Manning's *Navigating World History: Historians Create a Global Past* (2003), lauded as an excellent reference "for instructors seeking to create programs in graduate world history education,"[38] appoints Wallerstein one of three "founding fathers" of world history, along with Philip Curtin and Alfred Crosby. (Bentley also acknowledges Curtin's and Crosby's "seminal" contributions.) Manning, a specialist in African history, founder of Northeastern University's World History Center, and currently Andrew W. Mellon Professor of World History at the University of Pittsburgh, believes that Wallerstein, Curtain, and Crosby made the "most lasting contributions" to the development of the idea that world history is "the study of connections between communities and between communities and their environments" (15). Manning himself calls for a world history that emphasizes "interconnections rather than dominance" and celebrates the equal interplay and collective experiences of all regions of the world (xi).

Forget for the moment the apparent lack of connection between this harmonious view and Wallerstein's system of dominance. Manning adds that Africa – yes, the same Black Africa that Marlow in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* called "the blankest of blank spaces" on a map – has

[37] In his 1987 article "Periodization of World History Teaching," Peter Stearns also refers to Wallerstein's model as "one of the most fruitful general theories for world history" (371).

[38] These words are expressed in the editorial comments on the book's back cover.

not only been "a region connected to most other world areas," but also one in which its own regional connections were more about mutual interaction and less about dominance (xi). The history of Africa has been uniquely connected to Europe, the Americas, and the Middle East; it has also been a land in which the Bantu-speaking peoples, for example, managed to disperse their languages by absorbing other peoples and cultures rather than by conquering them. African history can thus be narrated in terms of i) international experiences of enslavement and racism – "largely imposed from outside the community" (159) – and ii) an idyllic pre-colonial existence resembling the Ibo way of life described by Chinua Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* (1959).[39] The basic message of Manning's book is that the study of Africa provides students with a model of how they should write a true world history: it not only teaches them about the Eurocentric heritage of racial discrimination, but how to write about a tiny village, a small region, or a nation of Africa in a way that still makes you a world historian. The game is to connect the village to another area of the world.

Manning *is* singularly interested in Europe's relations of dominance and its imposition of slavery on peaceful African communities. It is no accident that the world history founders he selected have dedicated their research careers to the study of European imperialism. Wallerstein's first two books were on African politics.[40] Likewise, Curtin's research has focused on African history and European colonization. His best-known works include: *The Atlantic Slave Trade* (1969); *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex: Essays in Atlantic History* (1990); *Disease and Empire: The Health of European Troops in the Conquest of Africa* (1998); and *The World and the West: European Challenge and the*

[39] Jan Vansina's book on the migrations of the Bantu peoples, *Paths in the Rainforest: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa* (1990), receives the most detailed appraisal in Manning's bibliographical book (240–46, 254). I might add that the novel *Things Fall Apart* has acquired the status of "required reading" in world history courses. I would counterbalance this novel with another classic on the disillusioned hopes of the African post-colonial era, Ayi Armah's *The Beautiful Ones are Not Yet Born* (1968).

[40] See Bogumil Jewsiewicki (1987). In my estimation, Wallerstein – who views everything from the perspective of the structural logic of the "world capitalist system" – has had far greater academic influence than Noam Chomsky. Many of Chomsky's pamphlets became "best-sellers," but mostly among undergraduates; his scholarly influence has been limited to the arcane field of linguistics. By contrast, Wallerstein's impact, as can be gathered from Google, has been heavily felt throughout the social sciences and directly in world history where he has been crowned one of the founding fathers!

Overseas Response in the Age of Empire (2000). One book, *Cross- Cultural Trade in World History* (1984), seems global in scope, but is primarily preoccupied with "trade diasporas" connected to Africa. And the titles of his two most celebrated books attest to Crosby's research interests: *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (1972) and *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900–1900* (1986). These works argue that the histories of nations have been fundamentally affected by the trans-hemispheric movements of micro-parasites, diseases, plants, and animals.

What Manning really objects to are the relations of dominance that recount the ascendancy of the West in terms of its own cultural and institutional attributes. Over and over again he tries to downplay transformations and events traditionally associated with European history by portraying them as global processes to the point of trivializing them. For example, regarding Magellan's circumnavigation of the earth, Manning says: "it was not just Europeans who confirmed that the world was spherical" (never mind that Eratosthenes (276–195 BC) had already calculated with remarkable accuracy the circumference of the earth) but "literate and informed people everywhere, of all backgrounds, who could henceforth state with precision the geological extent and limits of the planet" (111).[41] Manning also asserts that the Italian Renaissance should be portrayed as a global process occasioned by Europe's connections to the New World and the more "advanced" cultures of the Near East. These connections are more important to the study of world history than the "superstructural" works of Petrarch, Dante, Boccaccio, Raphael, Michelangelo, and Machiavelli.

Works which are truly global in scope and about explaining world history, including J. M. Robert's *History of the World* (1995) and Leften Stavrianos's *Man's Past and Present: A Global History* (1971), are deemed too "parochial" in their preoccupation with the internal factors that led to the rise of the West. Meanwhile, the following types of works are classified as appropriate examples of world history writing:

[41] Manning justifies this conclusion on the strength of a single fact communicated to him by Adam McKeown of Columbia University about an unidentified sailor who "joined Magellan's fleet in 1519, and survived the voyage." They may have in mind a Filipino servant named Enrique, who travelled with Magellan constantly. Because Enrique survived the completion of the trip, whereas Magellan died, it has been said that "Enrique thus became the first man to circumnavigate the world" (Whitfield 1998: 93). But should this understandable recollection of Enrique detract us from Magellan's own planning of the expedition, which was completed by his second in command, Sebastian del Cano, after Magellan's death?

Mark Kurlansky's *Cod: A Biography of the Fish that Changed the World* (1997); Hilary's Beckle's *Natural Rebel: A Social History of Enslaved Women in Barbados* (1989); Salme Said's *Memoirs of an Arabian Princess from Zanzibar* (1989); Jason Thompson's "Osman Effendi: A Scottish Convert to Islam in Early Nineteenth Century Egypt" (1994). Braudel's three-volume work, *Civilization and Capitalism*, is reproved as "inconsistently" global for its focus "on European data and on European impetus to change" (68). Never mind that Braudel's world scale is larger than that of any of the "founders," that his work, far from being overtly preoccupied with such single-issues such as slaves, parasites, or Christians who converted Islam, offers a total view of life, demography, urbanization, transportation, technology, food, clothing, housing, money, social classes, state power, and international trade.[42]

Manning's argument that world history should be a field singularly preoccupied with the "study of connections" between the regions of the world reveals a fundamental problem no current world historian has been willing to tackle: what if the regions of the world have *not* been connected in the same way and in the same degree throughout their histories? What if Eurasia has been the most connected landmass? What if the civilization of China, within this landmass, was relatively more isolated owing to some major geographical barriers? Clearly, China faced to the east the vast Pacific Ocean; to the south and the west, the impassable gorges of the Burma border and the inhospitable plateau of the Tibetan Himalayas, called the "roof of the world;" and to the northwest and north it faced the sparsely populated grasslands of Central Asia, the Gobi desert, the fifth largest desert in the world. Contacts with other regions did occur, with India through the northwest corridor, with the Arab world by sea, and through the Silk Road along the Steppes. But the salient point is that China developed her own culture in a comparatively less connected way than the civilizations of Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Mediterranean world. Now, what if were to agree with the *early* McNeill that "the generation of new styles of life seems to be related to the intensity of contact between people having alien ways of life"? Does it not follow that those regions

[42] At one point, Manning proposes this rather revealing question: "Does world history encompass the history of Europe and North America?…Does world history conflict with the histories of Europe and North America? What historical works based in US and European history make substantial contributions to the understanding of world history" (102)? Should it not be self-evident that *world* history should encompass the histories of Europe and North America, and the contributions of historians who write of these regions? Manning "proposes not to deal" with these questions.

with the most intense connections may have been more diverse and dynamic in their cultural styles? In effect, if world history is concerned above all else with inter-cultural connections, should we not pay more attention to the more connected regions? One could indeed argue that, insofar as multiculturalism logically entails a multi-centric approach, it privileges the multi-culturally connected regions of the world above the less multi-cultural regions. It privileges the multicultural societies of the West over the more homogeneous societies of China and Japan. But the truth is that actual historical connections matter less to current world historians than the promotion of a uniformly global history. The "World History for Us All" project is very clear on this:

> The primary geographical context for studying human history is the *globe*. The earth is a 'place' whose inhabitants have a *shared* history. Events and developments may take place within the confines of continents, regions, civilizations, or nation-states, but those 'spaces' remain parts of the globe in all its roundness…We can never assume that developments which appear to occur in a particular country or society are necessarily disconnected from or uninfluenced by developments occurring in neighboring regions or even in the world as a whole.[43]

This is why Manning had no reservations choosing Black Africa as the model of world connections even though it is empirically the case that sub-Sahara Africa was historically one of the most isolated regions of the world. He is less interested in the history of Africa 'as it was' than as it 'should have been' and as it 'should be in the future'. Had he been interested in the history of Africa as it was, he would have emphasized the following geographical disconnections: firstly, sub-Sahara Africa is surrounded by the Sahara Desert in the north, which hindered contact with the Mediterranean, and by the Kalahari Desert in the south, which partially disconnected the southern plateau and coastal regions from central Africa. Secondly, on the western side, Africa is faced by the vast Atlantic Ocean that Portuguese navigators only managed to navigate

[43] World History for Us All (http://worldhistoryforusall.sdsu.edu/default.php) is "a powerful, innovative model curriculum" for teaching world history in middle and high schools. It is a project organized by San Diego State University in cooperation with the National Center for History in the Schools at UCLA, supported by major organizations, including the National Endowment for the Humanities. The project director is Ross Dunn, Professor Emeritus in San Diego State University, where he has taught African, Islamic, and world history. His books include *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta, a Muslim Traveler of the 14th Century* (1989), and *Resistance in the Desert: Moroccan Responses to French Imperialism, 1881–1912* (1977).

southwards in the 16th century. To the north and south of the equator, Black Africa had to contest with dense rainforests which occupy a west-east band of territory from the southern coast of West Africa across to the Congo basin and all the way to the Kenya highlands. Moreover, with an average elevation of 660 meters, African cultures were limited by the presence of few natural harbors where ships can dock, and few navigable rivers (Sowell 1998: 99–109). Of the Niger, the Congo, the Nile, the Zambezi, and the Orange Rivers, only the Nile has relatively long navigable areas. All in all, Africa, in the words of Braudel, faced "a serious handicap, because all progress in civilization is made easier by mutual contact and influence" (1995: 124). There were other difficulties: long dry spells followed by torrential rains, limits on the number of days land could be worked, intrinsically poorer soils, more deadly (tropical) diseases, and a serious lack of draft animals in farming (Jones 1981; Landes 1998). Instead of arguing, as Blaut does (2000), that all the environments of the world should be spoken of in the same terms, why not praise the talent and perseverance that enabled the African peoples to adapt to such difficult environments?[44]

One could reasonably argue that there was a greater diversity of peoples, civilizations, languages, and customs merged in the ancient Near East and in the Mediterranean world than in any other ecumenical region of the world.[45] The view that civilization began in Mesopotamia and Egypt and then progressed successively to Greece, Rome, and finally to Europe was from the beginning based on the supposition that cultural progression resulted from intense cultural interaction. Hegel (1956), to whom I shall pay serious attention in chapter six, was correct in his intuition that the three continents that compose the Old World have an essential relation to each other and constitute a unity around a single sea, the Mediterranean. Black Africa impinged on this historical unity but did not participate in it in the same degree. We will see in

[44] In his encyclopedic 800-page study, *Africa, A Biography of the Continent* (1999), John Reader writes: "Parasites and disease affecting humans are uniquely prevalent in Africa. The afflictions are numerous; the means of infection bewildering and various" (241).

[45] For all the attention Mote pays to the "diversity" of China's cultural traditions, he correctly observes: "The ancient Mediterranean was a culturally pluralistic world of great diversity, albeit of high-level communication and dissemination of ideas. The Chinese, in contrast, knew no other high civilization until they became vaguely, distantly, and inaccurately aware of India through Buddhism half a millennium or more later, and not really directly until the West began to make a significant impact on Chinese minds in the nineteenth century" (1989: 47).

chapter six that part of the uniqueness of European civilization was its higher degree of connections.

Disparaging the West: Felipe Fernandez-Armesto

This lack of interest in the Western world finds extreme expression in Felipe Fernandez-Armesto's 1000+ page textbook entitled *The World: A History* (2007). Fernandez-Armesto is one of the most highly regarded historians today. Since 2005 he has held the Prince of Asturias Chair in Spanish Culture and Civilization at Tufts University. His best-selling book, *Millennium: A History of the Last Thousand Years* (1995), which inspired CNN's *Millennium*, brought him global attention. His journalistic works have been widely syndicated and appear frequently in the London *Times*, the *Guardian*, and regularly in the Sunday edition of the *Independent*. He has also contributed to BBC Radio, most often as a panelist on *Room for Improvement*, *International Question Time*, and *Night Waves*. *The World: A History* was produced by Pearson Prentice Hall, the world's largest publisher of academic and reference textbooks. The praises cited in the press release were quite momentous: "It comes close to being the Holy Grail for world history teachers," proclaimed Patricia Seed, Professor of History, University of California, Irvine. "I expect that it will become the world history textbook for this generation, and the standard by which subsequent books are measured," said David Rowley, Associate Professor of History at Wisconsin-Platteville.

The World: A History was indeed no ordinary undertaking. It was evaluated by more than one hundred reviewers from a wide variety of institutions across the country and around the world and class-tested by more than a thousand students at fifteen academic institutions across the U.S.

This text deliberately plays down the history of ancient Greece, Rome, and Christian Europe at the same time that it overplays the history of Asia, Africa, and the Americas. Its conceptual rationale follows the current orthodoxy almost verbatim: humans are members of the same species and inhabitants of various habitats; what matters in world history are the interconnections between human communities and between passive humans and the environment. Combined with this "objective" preoccupation with connections one finds the message that world history should reflect, and be sensitive to, our current

"embattled biosphere" and our current "need" for "diversity" and human togetherness. But what if the actual history does not relinquish its truth in this manner? What if humans in the past were not as interested in the interconnectedness of cultures? What if ancient Greece was an exceptional culture that belonged to the same earth close to the Near East but that also produced a continuous sequence of exceptional artists, philosophers, historians, poets, and scientists?

These are the first words we hear from Armesto about the West in the section "Early Greek Society":

> We have idealized the Greeks as originators of our civilization and embodiments of all our values. However, scholars have been revising almost everything that has traditionally been said about them […] Until recently, people in the West hailed the Greeks as originators of democracy… [but] Greeks counted only privileged males as citizens…women were excluded. So were slaves, who made up 40 percent of the population….When we look at [Greek states] now we see fragments of an oppressive system that made slaves of captives, victims of women, battle fodder of men, and scapegoats of failures (132).

Armesto essentially walks over what was uniquely Greek – the existence of a government that allowed for the full participation of all male citizens – in the name of facts that were, in varying ways, common features of the rest of the ancient world. These facts about the Greeks were not unknown "until recently." They have been known since ancient times, starting with the Greeks themselves. Anyone familiar with classical Greek sources, say, Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*, knows that the Greeks never idealized their societies, but were the first people to care about the veracity of historical facts, the first to point to the "follies and foibles" of their leaders, to speak straightforwardly about their own weaknesses and mistakes in a way that one rarely finds in other cultures. It is also the case that many books have been written on Greek democracy during the last hundred years that invariably acknowledge the points Armesto makes; they recognized the obvious reality that ancient Greece was not the liberal democratic culture the modern West was to become.

What troubles Armesto, I would argue, is not that "we" have idealized Greek culture by ignoring slavery. It is the persisting idea that the Greeks may have been exceptional despite their failings. If one pays careful attention to the "idealized" version famously associated with Johann Winckelmann that gained prominence among Europeans during the 18th and early 19th centuries, one finds less a

naive understanding than a strong enthusiasm for what Winckelmann called "the noble simplicity and calm grandeur" of the Greeks. Armesto wishes to demote the study of the Greeks from their esteemed position. He derides "philhellenism" (love of Greece and Greek culture) as "idealistic." Now, it is true that admirers of the self-sacrifice and intelligence of the Greeks focused primarily on the achievements of high culture. But already in the third quarter of the 19th century we find the historian Jacob Burckhardt challenging this vision in *The Greeks and Greek Civilization*: it purposely brings out the dark side, the agonal, aggressive nature of Greek individuals. The young Nietzsche, too, in his first book released in 1872, *The Birth of Tragedy*, insisted on the irrational and mythical forces of Greek Homeric culture. But Nietzsche sought to comprehend how these dark primeval elements, as I shall be explaining in chapter eight, were inextricably related to what was noble and "civilized" in Greece. The "interconnectedness" multicultural historians are calling for is an ecological idea without connection to the historical context of ancient Greece.

Armesto insists that "the idea that the Greeks were a self-made civilization, owing almost nothing to other cultures" has been discredited. Greece had, "as scholars now say, an east face" (133). I need to insist that classical scholars have never written that Greece owed almost nothing to the Near East. Burckhardt, like many others since, was plainly aware of the material tradition that the Greeks inherited from outside. The Greeks "themselves," he wrote, "did not generally begrudge other nations their inventions and discoveries" (1998: 136). Western civilization textbooks have always started with Mesopotamia and Egypt, just to teach students that Greece was not a self-made civilization. What's the bone of contention? It is that Armesto, and multicultic historians at large, want to go beyond claims of borrowings to argue that Greece was not "original" at all? They cannot see that Greek originality does not preclude debts to earlier civilizations.

On the events leading to the Persian-Greek Wars, Armesto writes mostly of Greek disunity and of Persian unity and respect and generosity. On the actual wars themselves he offers only one sentence: "Persia, after testing the difficulties of conquering Greece in unsuccessful invasions in 490 and 480 BCE, was generally content to keep these enemies divided, while prioritizing Persian rule over rich, soft Egypt" (201–2). What did Armesto leave out? The context of the Persian-Greek wars: firstly, that the Greek cities in Asia Minor had fallen under the control of Persia in 546 BC; that there was an organized Greek rebellion that

spread throughout the Greek cities of Asia Minor, which was eventually defeated by the Persians, who went on to wipe out Miletus, killing and enslaving everyone. Secondly, that the Persians then sent an expedition to punish Athens for offering some help to the rebellion, and to control the Aegean Sea. Thirdly, he ignored the fact that this expedition led to the battle of Marathon, which resulted in a defeat for the Persians and demonstrated the superiority of hoplite warfare over chariot warfare. Fourthly, that in 481 BC the Persian king Xerxes put together an army of one hundred fifty thousand men and a navy of six hundred ships set to conquer weak, divided, and tiny Greece, and that the Battle of Salamis in 481 BC alone was the most significant naval battle of the history of the ancient world. And fifth, that while Greece was not fully united, and was heavily outnumbered by mighty Persia, the Greeks successfully defeated the Persians, setting the stage for one of the greatest intellectual periods in human history, which might not have occurred had the Persians been successful (Strauss 2004).

Armesto's denial of the importance of the Persian-Greek Wars cannot be excused with claims that one cannot cover every subject of world history in one textbook.[46] Roughly counting, the pages dedicated to the West, as of page 528, before the "rise" of the modern West, are a meager forty plus – to Greece, the Hellenistic world, Rome, and Medieval and Renaissance Europe combined – in comparison to the approximate twenty-three pages dedicated to the Mongols alone. Those forty plus pages are mostly negative.

Armesto devotes a few sentences to Roman high culture; naturally, the Roman Empire, difficult to hide on a map, gets a few pages, but the conclusion is that this empire was inferior to the Chinese. In the section "China and Rome Compared" (245), he states in point form that (i) Chinese armies "can get quickly to any point on the frontier," whereas Roman movement of troops and information is "impeded" by "narrow sea lanes"; (ii) "subject peoples embrace Chinese identity; barbarian immigrants adopt Chinese customs and language," whereas in Rome "north-south gap leads to envy and hostility, limited identification by barbarians"; (iii) in China "productivity and technical

[46] After disparaging Plato as a member of a "gang" of rich men, Armesto observes that Plato wrote brilliantly and persuasively, only to inform students why he managed to exercise such an influence over the West: "His guardians, however, became the inspiration and the intellectual ancestors of elites, aristocracies, party hacks, and self appointed supermen whose justification for tyrannizing others has always been that they know best" (172).

inventiveness lead to self-sufficiency," whereas in Rome "adverse balance of trade drains wealth out of the empire." These comparisons do not take into consideration radical differences in the making of these two empires. Rome, for one, was a true empire built in the most competitive region of the world. The non-Han Chinese living today in south Asia were once living in China, but were all expelled by the Han, who today hold almost a complete monopoly over the ethnicity of China; the natural properties of rice, as I will argue in the next chapter, accounts largely for China's higher productivity.

Medieval Europe, the period Marcia Colish (1998: ix) saw as the true "foundation" of the West because this "was the only traditional society known to history to modernize itself from within, intellectually no less than economically and technologically," gets some positive words for "originating" windmills, ground lenses, and clocks, but the emphasis, nevertheless, is on Europe's borrowing of paper mills, the compass, firearms, and the blast furnace from Asia. Some attention is directed to the art, literature, and scholarship of this period, but the concluding words of this section are directed to Muslim centers of learning in Spain and Muslim transmission of science and mathematics to Europe (363–70). One sentence speaks "of evidence of dynamism in the Western Europe of the eleventh and twelfth centuries," but the same sentence tells us that this dynamism "was expended" on internal wars of aggression and colonization. This sentence, moreover, is located in a sequence of paragraphs dealing with the destructive effects of the Crusades on a Muslim world that had been in a state of peaceful coexistence with Christian and Jewish communities; a Muslim world that defeated the crusaders and thus "helped alert people in Europe to the backwardness and vulnerability of their part of the world compared to the cultures of the Near East" (380–1).

Defenders of Armesto will surely argue that he does give the West its due when it enters onto the world stage in the 16th century – in such section headings as "The Renaissance 'Discovery of the World' " (621), "The Rise of Western Science" (625), "The West's Productivity Leap" (690), "The Enlightenment in Europe" (747), "Western Dominance in the Nineteenth Century" (842), and "Western Science Ascendant" (918). But even in these sections Armesto's singular goal is to instill the idea that the West was a perennially backward civilization that only emerged in the 19th century thanks to the benevolent influences of Asia. Right away, as he starts dealing with the growth of a "more empirical" scientific tradition in Europe in the century preceding the

Portuguese expeditions, Armesto cannot but insist that the Chinese tradition in observation and experiment remained ahead of Western science well into the modern era (434).

How does Armesto account for the eventual European upsurge in navigation, exploration, cartography, ballistics, mathematics, and astronomical thinking? By ignoring all these matters and writing instead that "Europeans were backward in navigation compared with the Indian Ocean peoples" and compared with China (508). And how did Europeans link the Old World to the New World, and the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic? They were lucky; China, the most advanced maritime nation, was not interested in establishing global links with her poor neighbors, otherwise Europeans would have been unable to meet her majestic fleet. Besides, he adds, it was not really "Europe" that engaged in explorations but "people from a few communities on the Atlantic seaboard" (512). One of the few mariners was Columbus, and he was not an explorer in any case, but a "weaver" who imagined himself a captain and who "took to exploration to escape the restricted social opportunities at home." Europe's exploration "was probably not the result of science or strength, so much as of delusion and desperation" (518). Prince Henry, "misrepresented as a navigator motivated by scientific curiosity," was just another character who "imagined himself a romantic hero" but "in truth never went exploring" (517). To the contrary, as we shall see in chapter four, the remarkable Portuguese rounding of the Cape and the creation of a seaborne empire in the Indian Ocean was deliberately planned from the very beginning.

The overall impression Armesto gives of the West is that it was a marginal civilization with few accomplishments until it "leaped" suddenly onto the world scene in the 19th century. The Renaissance is a "much-abused word," "no radically new departure occurred in the fifteenth century" (513). From the 16th to the 18th centuries, Europeans were able to develop their navigational capacities "partly thanks to borrowings from Asian technology" (533–35), and partly thanks to the "huge bonanza of land, of food and mineral resources" they acquired from the New World, which eventually allowed the "formerly impoverished West" to challenge the centuries-long dominant economies of Asia (562). Even with respect to the Scientific Revolution, Armesto can barely get himself to say that "Western science registered leaps in the 17th century," stating in the same sentence that this revolution was "partly because of privileged access to the recycled learning of classical

antiquity and partly to the new data accumulated during the exploration of the world" (625).

Exactly how traveling to the New World produced the law of inertia is not clear to me. For Armesto, the science and philosophy of Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, Newton, Laplace, Descartes, and Bacon was no more original than the neo-Confucian "scientific" revival of the 17th century – both were "comparable in kind" (630). He cannot, however, ignore the fact that Western science does start to have an effect on technical skills, resulting in an eventual "reversal" in the balance of military and industrial power away from Asia. But this is only a momentary acknowledgment, as some pages later he states that modern science had little effect on the Industrial Revolution, and repeats that "the [modern] science of the West had largely been anticipated in China" (691).

Why did China not experience industrialization? The "global context" did not favor it – forget that China had enjoyed a balance of trade surplus for centuries. The British, on the other hand, were "privileged" gainers of the growing trans-Atlantic trade. Without any qualms about the validity of the long-discredited argument, as I will demonstrate in some detail in the next two chapters, that the Industrial Revolution was made possible by the exploitation of the New World, Armesto happily writes: "The New Europe made the West big. A culture crammed, for most of its history, into a small, remote, and beleaguered corner of Eurasia, now had much of the Western Hemisphere and important parts of the Pacific and Africa at its disposal" (700).

How did a West that was just "beginning" to gain some advantages manage to have most of the world at its disposal? And, if Europe was uniquely different in the accidental creation of a global empire, how do we make sense of Armesto's own words that during the 18th century China, "by almost every standard, [was] still the fastest-growing empire in the world" (740)? China is great in the acquisition of an empire (which does not allow her to industrialize) and Europe is lucky and colonial. The chapter on the Enlightenment is similarly designed to reduce European responsibility and augment the role of "overseas ideas." "The Enlightenment was global in its inspiration" and the arrival of ideas from Asia was "the more fundamental contribution" (738). China was (in "key respects") a "more modern society" than the West, "a better educated society," "a more entrepreneurial society," "a more industrialized society," a "more egalitarian society" (740). The Renaissance, the Cartographic Revolution, the Military Revolution,

the Reformation, the Scientific Revolution, the Industrial Revolution, the rise of representative institutions, the Enlightenment were not really European; China was still "more industrialized" and "more enlightened" as a matter of course. The "inferiority" of the West (a word never used in reference to non-Western cultures) was "only beginning to be reversed" in the eighteenth century (743).

Armesto's text was released fresh in the hills of a string of works published after the mid-1990s all dedicated to the dismantling of the "Eurocentric" consensus on the "rise of the West." The most influential of these works included Jack Goody's *The East in the West* (1996); Bin Wong's *China Transformed: Historical Change and the Limits of European Experience* (1997); A. G. Frank's *Re-Orient: Economy in the Asian Age* (1998), James Blaut's *Eight Eurocentric Historians* (2000); Kenneth Pomeranz's The *Great Divergence. China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (2000), John Hobson's *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilization* (2004), and Jack Goldstone's extended essay, "Efflorescences and Economic Growth in World History: Rethinking the 'Rise of the West' and the Industrial Revolution" (2002). These works were exclusively directed against the idea that Europe possessed any cultural attributes that could be contrasted to the world's cultures. In the next three chapters I will evaluate the merits of this new orthodoxy and the relevance of the old Eurocentric model.

CHAPTER TWO

EUROCENTRISM OVER SINOCENTRISM

> The style of Marx's writings is not that of the investigator…he does not quote examples or adduce facts which run counter to his own theory but only those which clearly support or confirm that which he considers the ultimate truth. The whole approach is one of vindication, not investigation, but it is a vindication of something proclaimed as the perfect truth with the conviction not of the scientist but of the believer. Karl Jaspers

The Basic Empirical Claims of the Revisionists

The "rise of the West" is the Queen subject of world history. Some decades ago there was a consensus that the Occident could be singularly contrasted to the Orient as early as the ancient Greeks, if not later during Renaissance times. Eurocentric questions tended to dominate comparative historical inquiry. Why did the Romans invent a rational system of legal concepts that reflected the individuality of each person? Why did Europeans round the cape of Africa and discover America? Why did modern science arise in Europe and not in the civilizations of Islam and China?[1] Why did England industrialize first? The implications of these questions were clear: either look for those traits that set Europe apart from Asia and allowed it to modernize first or, conversely, search for "what went wrong" in the non-Western world.

While there were persistent debates on the factors that produced the divergence – when, how, and why – most historians were convinced that (at least) sometime before 1700 Europe already enjoyed some *internally generated* advantage over Asia. During the last two decades, however, a determined army of revisionists, led by Jack Goody, Andre Gunder Frank, Jack Goldstone, Ken Pomeranz, Bing Wong, Eric

[1] I will generally use the terms "West," "Europe" and "Western Europe" interchangeably. Roughly speaking, these terms refer to the western extremity of the Eurasian landmass, starting approximately at the eastern borders of the contemporary nation-states of Poland, Hungary, and the former Czechoslovakia. These regions reflect those areas which came under the influence of Greco-Roman culture and Latin Christendom.

Mielants, and John Hobson have mounted a frontal empirical attack on this Eurocentric consensus. Taking these scholars as a group, we may sum up their basic claims as follows:

1. Urban centers throughout Southeast Asia and the entire Indian Ocean basin were part of a complex network of international trade long before European merchants began travelling to the East. Indeed, as late as the 1700s, China was able to maintain a positive balance of trade against Europe which, apart from the bullion it obtained from the Americas, had few competitive goods to offer in the global market.
2. The distinction Eurocentrics had drawn between an "Oriental Despotic" East and a free-market, liberal West is groundless. The Chinese state "supported the principles of market exchange and sought to protect buyers from monopoly power" (Wong 1997: 139). "In fact, the European private (but state-controlled) colonial enterprises stood in sharp contrast to the more peaceful [Asian] free-market economy" (Mielants 2007: 83).
3. Europeans were not uniquely rational in practicing birth control and ensuring higher living standards. If western Europeans accepted celibacy and late marriage, the Chinese controlled fertility by delaying pregnancy within marriage and practicing long birth intervals. Birth rates in China were arguably below those of Europe throughout 1550 to 1850.
4. The ancient civilizations of Asia were already practicing intense farming methods with complex irrigation schemes. The typical yield to seed ratio for wheat during medieval European times was 4:1, whereas for medieval Sung China (AD 960–1279) it was about 10:1, and a good deal better for rice at about 20:1. Only in *modern* Europe (1750–1850) would we see wheat yield ratios of approximately 10:1.
5. Eighteenth-century China and Europe were organically-based economies facing similar paths of diminishing returns, scarce resources, and rising prices. The living standards of the most advanced civilizations of Asia were comparable to those of the most developed regions of Europe. It was only after 1820 - 1830, with the widespread deployment of steam engines and of artificial fertilizers in agriculture, that England overcame the Malthusian limitations of the past.

In light of these claims, and others to be discussed later, revisionist scholars have concluded that the standard interpretations of the

"rise of the West" should be replaced by new perspectives. Although these academics have not always offered the same explanations, their answers may be broadly summed up as follows:

1. It was the boon of colonial profits and resources, as well as the "fortuitous" presence of cheap coal, that set England and Europe on a different course of self-sustaining growth. China was forced to follow a labor-intensive path because it lacked convenient access to coal and an easy-to-exploit trading partner like the American colonies.
2. The one genuine "internal" contribution Europeans made to their own ascendency was the creation of political, fiscal, and military institutions dedicated to the promotion of big capitalist corporations, the acquisition of colonial territories, and the advancement of interstate power. The "free" city-states and monarchies of medieval times, and the nation-states of modern times, implemented an effective policy of militarization and monopolization of overseas markets and resources, which stood in sharp contrast to the more benign trade and colonial policies of Asian powers. While Eastern societies were no less prone to the accumulation of wealth in a rationally efficient way, and no less able to navigate the oceans, they did not seek territories to conquer or sea lanes to monopolize.

The undertone of these claims is that Europe was just "one culture among others" except for the unadulterated and efficient manner it went about colonizing markets and using efficient methods of coercion to do so. The second explanation for Europe's uniqueness, as we shall see in the main in chapter four, is singularly interesting in that it has become a point around which revisionists (who emphasize the primacy of colonial resources) and their critics (who emphasize the importance of European institutions) are finding common (though not identical) ground.

In the next three chapters I intend to challenge each of these claims and explanations – as they have been expressed distinctively by each of the authors – on the basis of a painstaking examination of the existing literature, including a wide range of statistical findings. My investigation in this chapter will be closely structured around some key texts, starting in the main with Andre Gunder Frank's *Re-Orient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (1998). This book was the first effort to replace the Eurocentric model with an entirely new vision in which Asia would come to play center stage in world history until the nineteenth century. It is a text which asserts with great confidence that

the evidence it has assembled against "Eurocentric" arguments "is so abundant and systematic that it empirically invalidates them altogether" (321). I will also evaluate Bin Wong's important work, *China Transformed: Historical Change and the Limits of European Experience* (1997) and its claim that Europe and China were both facing similar Malthusian limits to growth as late as the eighteenth century. And finally, I will consider James Lee and Wang Feng's statistical representation of modern China as a land of low fertility and moderate mortality, as argued in their book *One Quarter of Humanity* (1999).

The Two Arguments of Re-Orient

A. G. Frank is best known as the author who occasioned a new epoch in development studies with the publication of one of the most widely read books of its time, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America* (1969). The influence he has exercised in the academic world and over the minds of students is unprecedented. This may be adjudicated by looking at the number of publications he has produced. *The Underdevelopment of Development: Essays in Honor of Andre Gunder Frank* (1996) informs us in the Appendix that from 1955 to 1995, Frank penned 880 publications in 27 languages; that is, 35 books in 126 editions, including 160 chapters in 136 edited books, and 350 plus articles in 600 periodical issues! His official website[2] informs us that from 1996 to 2003, he published an additional 44 book titles in 140 different language editions, including 169 chapters and over 400 journal articles!

Needless to say, this is quite an accomplishment. My impression, however, is that Frank's work after the mid-1970s lacked zeal and originality. *Re-Orient* is a whole new departure, both in effort and topic. It intends nothing less than a fundamental reinterpretation of world history, including a major modification and restatement of Frank's previous position on the world capitalist system. Frank writes in the preface that it is his "best book." The academic world has certainly welcomed it with an exceptionally high number of book reviews, review-essays (including my own), conference sessions, web based discussions and prizes. *Re-Orient* was the recipient of the World History Association "First Book Prize" in 1999, and The American

[2] http://www.rrojasdatabank.info/agfrank/

Sociological Association "Political Economy of World-Systems Book Award" in 2000. By 2004, it was in its sixth printing, including a fourth printing, as of 2002, by the Beijing Central Compilation & Translation Press, and by the Tokyo-based Fujiwara Shoten Press.

Re-Orient is a clearly written, highly stimulating, and well-researched study of world demographic trends, production, trade, and money flows in the period 1400 to 1800. It carefully integrates a large body of separate data, as well as seemingly divergent economic trends, into a cohesive, self-contained thesis. The book is constructed around two major arguments. The first is that world capitalism was not the creation of Europe; the East generated a global market economy, which it dominated as recently as 1750–1800. Even after the discovery of the Americas, Europe was neither central to the world economy nor ahead of it. In terms of population growth, gains in productivity, technological innovation, and even per capita income, China and India, in particular, kept their lead over Europe well into the 18th century. Before 1500 Europe was hardly a player in the world economy. It was the extraction of gold and silver from the Americas that finally gave Europe the opportunity to increase its participation, though not domination, in this economy. China continued to have a positive balance of trade *vis-à-vis* the world until the 1700s, including Europe, which had a trade deficit due to its inability to produce competitive exports.

This first argument also challenges, though in a rather sketchy way, the commonly held view that the rise of Newtonian science made possible the mechanical innovations of the First Industrial Revolution. Technological progress is a world economic process rather than a culturally regional process. The Eurocentric claim that Europe with its "exceptional" culture and institutions created a higher level of technical and scientific proficiency is no more than a myopic perspective lacking a global vision. As it is, the so-called "scientific revolution" of the 17th century only impacted upon productive technology after the middle of the 19th century; that is, after the Industrial Revolution. Frank thus cites instances of eastern influences on the development of science and technology in Europe dating back to the middle ages through the Renaissance and later. In fact, Frank argues that many parts of Asia, especially China, had equal, if not superior, technologies in guns, ships, textiles, metallurgy and agriculture up until the industrial revolution. The financial and economic institutions of the East were neither less "rational" nor more "despotic" than those of Europe. Asians behaved just as rationally as Europeans in the use of their resources.

The second major argument in *Re-Orient* attempts to explain why Europe began to assume a dominant position in the world market after 1750, a question which, according to Frank, could only be understood in terms of the *cyclical* patterns of the world economy. His version of the accidental origins of the divergence would have us believe that Europe rose because it was able to take advantage of Asia's "temporary" cyclical decline after 1800. Through the exploitation of the Americas, upon which Columbus had stumbled in pursuit of the riches of the East, the Europeans gradually attained a firm foothold within the Asian market. Without their American money they would never have been able to join this thriving market. The slave and colonial trade, as well as international trade in general, provided them with ample sources of capital to invest in new industrial technology. But these were not enough to induce investment in cost-reducing, labor-saving technologies. Frank adds that it was the higher European wage, as well as the higher costs of factors of production like charcoal, which provided the incentive to invest in new techniques. Europeans, in other words, were no more "rational" than Asians; they just happen to have been the accidental beneficiaries of higher wage-factor costs. The Chinese were just as rational in their reliance on their cheaper sources of labor supported by their more efficient agrarian system.

According to Frank, Marx and Weber, including Perry Anderson (1974), Robert Brenner (1976; 1983), Michael Mann (1986), John Hall (1985), Braudel, and Wallerstein had it all wrong: there was nothing "exceptional" about Europe from 1400 to 1750. In 1974, let us recall, Wallerstein had put forward his thesis that a modern capitalist world economy emerged in the 16th century. Before 1500, he argued, world systems like ancient Rome existed, but they were based on political–military domination, not economic–market exploitation. In 1989, however, Janet Abu-Lughod's *Before European Hegemony* added that a world economic system was already evident through much of the eastern hemisphere in the period 1250–1350. This system, which Abu-Lughod viewed as a forerunner of Wallerstein's system, was in decline just as the modern one began to rise. Now, a few years later, in 1994, Frank and Gills published *The World System: Five Hundred Years or Five Thousand?,* which daringly contended that the world had seen only one world system which originated 5000 years ago. This system had gone through long "A-phases" of expansion and "B-phases" of contraction, expanding in size and scale with each cycle.

Re-Orient takes off from here. It praises Abu-Lughod for suggesting correctly that Asia was the center of the world economy before Wallerstein's modern system; Europe was a "late runner" of an already pre-formed world economy. But Frank rejects Abu-Lughod's claim that this Asian dominated system was in decline after 1350, to be superseded by Wallerstein's truly global modern system. Rather, Frank sees the modern system (wrongly assumed to be European-controlled) as a mere continuation of a long-dominant Asian system. What was new about the 16th century was merely the fact that Europe, thanks to the "discovery" of the Americas, finally came to join – albeit as a marginal player – this Asian system. In *Re-Orient,* however, Frank does not press the idea that a world system was already in place 5000 years ago. Instead, his entire effort is devoted to demonstrating that Asia was the key player in the world economy from 1400 to 1800, which is to say that Wallerstein's vision of a newly formed world capitalist system expanding out of Europe to conquer the rest of the globe was fundamentally flawed, as were other world-system theories such as those of Arrighi (1994), Blaut (1993), and Chase-Dunn (1997).

Readers might recall that Braudel, in his magisterial three volume work, *Civilization and Capitalism 15th–18th Century* (1981; 1982; 1984), had already challenged Wallerstein's "fascination" with the 16th century: "There have always been world-economies," he observed (1984: 24). Ancient Phoenicia, Carthage, the Hellenistic world, Rome, Islam and other empires each had their own type of world economy. But note the hyphen in the term "world-economy," which Braudel used to distinguish between a world economy embracing the whole world, and a world-economy limited to one area of the world; that is, "an economically autonomous section of the planet able to provide for most of its own needs, a section to which its internal links and exchanges give a certain organic unity" (21–22).

Now Frank, without recalling Braudel's detailed portrayal of many other pre-1500 world-economies, makes much of this idea of a hyphen in his argument against Wallerstein and Braudel himself. He insists that there was only one Asia-dominated world economy (without a hyphen) from 1400 to 1800. One of the key features of *Re-Orient* is to show that such an Asia-dominated world economy did in fact once exist. About half the book consists in the mapping of this world system: the major export–import routes encircling the globe, linking every region from the Americas, through Europe and Africa, to West-Central and East Asia, including Russia and the Baltic. While he

recognizes multiple regions within this system, regions with indefinite and fluid roles, Frank nonetheless maintains that the balances of trade and divisions of labor within it remained quite stable in the period 1400–1800.

Frank detects four main overlapping regions: 1) the Atlantic, including the Americas, Africa, and Europe, with its triangular trade and flows of silver into Europe; 2) between Europe and the Middle East, both around the Cape and through the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf; 3) through the Indian Ocean, including East Africa, and across West and Central Asia, into the southeast; and, 4) in the China Seas, including India, Southeast Asia, Japan and China. China, far in the East but really the center of this world economy, was the ultimate "sink" in the flow of the world's silver and gold. What then of those mighty *conquistadores*? Wallerstein's 16th-century Europe was a "marginal player in the world economy with a perpetual deficit despite its relatively easy and cheap access to American money" (75).

The economic pull of China, with India close behind, was so strong that a massive flow of silver continually moved eastwards throughout this period. Why this trade deficit for Europe? Simply, this continent had nothing competitive to offer Asians in the way of products, except for the gold it had stolen from the Americas, which it used to pay for Asian imports. On the other hand, "the entire system of multilateral trade balances … relative to China's industrial superiority, acted as the magnet that resulted in China being the ultimate sink of the world's silver" (115). Frank observes that in the 17th–18th centuries about 70 percent of American silver production arrived into Europe, of which 40 percent was shipped to Asia. He states that of the 75 percent of American silver output shipped to Europe, over 60 percent found its way into Asia, much of which ended in China.

The argument that Europe suffered a chronic balance of payments deficit versus Asia during these centuries is well made by Frank. The voyages of Vasco da Gama and Columbus did not elevate Europe into the center of the world economy.[3] European-Asian trade remained a one-way affair, with Europe importing spices and silks from

[3] Naturally Wallerstein (1995) was not too happy being relegated to such a marginal position, and has responded to Frank's insistence that a world system was already in place five thousand years ago with the question: "Why stop at 3000 BC? Why not go back to Australopithecus?" This of course misses the point, since Frank is talking about the international trade networks formed with the rise of civilizations 5000 years ago.

Asia and exporting little of significance except the bullion it had gained as a windfall from the Aztecs and Incas. It was a trade surplus India and China enjoyed because their costs of production were lower, because their wages were lower, because their foodstuffs were cheaper, because their agriculture was more efficient – or so Frank argues – and because they had a whole variety of well-made manufactured commodities longed for by backward European consumers.

If we were to go by the key figures compiled by Frank, Asia (with China ahead) does *appear* to have been a superior economic performer in the world market during this epoch. First, from 1600 to 1750, Europe continued to account for an unchanging 18–19 percent of the world's population, whereas Asia's share increased from 60 percent to 66 percent. While Europe's population grew absolutely by 57 percent, Asia's grew by 87 percent (308). Moreover, if in 1750 Asia's population share was 66 percent, its share of world production was 80 percent. He writes:

> So, two-thirds of the world's people in Asia produced four-fifths of total output, while the one-fifth of world population in Europe produced only part of the remaining one-fifth share of world production to which Africans and Americans also contributed. Therefore on average Asians must have been significantly more productive than Europeans in 1750 (172–73)!

Even more surprising, perhaps, are the numbers Frank takes from Paul Bairoch (1981), according to which, in 1800, the per capita income of the "developed world" was $198 as compared to China's $210 — when the Industrial Revolution was in full gear in some parts of Europe (174). After offering a few additional estimates in which 18th-century Europe appears to be just slightly ahead in living standards around the world, Frank also cites another source by Bairoch (1993) where he "arrives at an estimate of 1 to 1.1, or virtual parity of incomes or standards of living around the world" (173).

One Asian World System?

These figures may seem startling to anyone who thought that the Industrial Revolution was the culmination of a centuries-old widening gap between Europe and Asia. I will argue below, however, that Frank's two basic arguments lack strong statistical support. In this section I will consider primarily the question whether there were many world-economies (with a hyphen) or just one system dominated by

Asia in the period 1400–1800, but first I would like to challenge from the start Frank's limited use of Bairoch's statistical conclusions. In his *Economics and World Development* (1993), Bairoch does speak of "virtual parity," but he also writes:

> If we restrict the 'starting point' comparison to richer parts of Europe (say the total of England, France, and the Netherlands) versus the average of the future Third World, my actual guess would be 20–40 percent superiority in this part of Europe (106).

Bairoch then makes the very important (but often forgotten observation) that these seemingly undersized differences are significant considering that we are dealing with pre-industrial societies living on the margins and in which therefore differences in average incomes could not have been very large. Moreover, Frank does not address in a serious way the more detailed, country-based estimations of Angus Maddison (1983). He takes from him (1991) only one isolated estimate in which China and Europe are shown to be almost the same in per capita production in 1400. But the overwhelming message of Maddison's numerous statistical studies is that Western European countries already had a considerable lead in per capita income before their economic growth accelerated after 1750. He has consistently come up with estimates placing England (Western Europe) ahead of China (Asia). He has, for example, produced statistics indicating that, by 1820, the per capita income for "all western Europe" (including the less developed areas of Portugal, Ireland and Spain) was $1,202, as contrasted to a per capita income for China of $600, for India of $533, and for Japan of $669. For Britain alone he has calculated a per capita income of $2,122 (2007: 309).

Maddison is currently the foremost comparative quantitative historian on the long run performance of nations, and in the next chapter I shall consider in more detail his estimations. Let me address now Frank's views on China's "supremacy" in the world economy. First, just reading *Re-Orient* with a critical eye is enough to give the reader some doubts about the existence of a world economy without a hyphen. For Frank, after acknowledging that *within* this world economy there were some intra-regional networks with a *higher* division of labor and a *higher* degree of trade *within* rather than *between* the four overlapping regions, and after examining intra-regional exchanges *within* Africa, West Asia, India, Southeast Asia, and *within* mainland China, does not have a single word to say about the *intra*-European trade.

Admittedly, *Re-Orient* sought to remedy the relative lack of attention scholars had hitherto given to Asia's role in the world market, in contrast to the countless books and articles they had devoted to Europe's role. (I should say *Western* scholars, since it is they who have burdened themselves with the multicultural requirement to be fair to the achievements of all cultures; Frank, after all, is a Westerner). But given Frank's thesis about the *world* economy, the following questions are inescapable: what percentage of European trade was intra-European? What percentage of the world trade was Asian and what percentage European? To cite a few readily available numbers, Europe's share of the volume of world trade in 1720 — at a time when, according to Frank, Asia was still the dominant economy — was 69 percent, whereas Asia's share was 11 percent (Rostow 1978: 70–1; Aldcroft, 1994, 20). Concerning the share of intra-European trade in Europe's total foreign trade, we find that, for France, Europe accounted for 75 percent of the imports and 89 percent of the exports at the beginning of the 18th century, and that, for Britain, in 1700, Europe accounted for 61 percent of imports, 74 percent of re-exports and 81 percent of exports. On the other hand, Asia's share of the European export trade was only 4 percent as late as 1830 (Goodman and Honeyman 1988: 57–59). Frank could argue that this *latter* figure complements his overall thesis, since part of his argument is that Europeans were marginal players in the "Asian dominated" world economy. He could argue that, despite their monopoly over bullion, Europeans did not take the Asian trade out of their hands. Conversely, he could add that Asians were hardly interested in the European market and that "Asia's trade with Europe, though growing over these centuries, still remained a very small share of Asia's trade with each other" (183). The literature does support (in part) Frank's challenge against what used to be known as the "Portuguese Epoch" in the Asian spice markets. For example, "only" about 30 percent of Malabar pepper production went to Lisbon in 1515, whereas the remaining 70 percent was consumed by Asians; European imports accounted for only 17 percent of clove production in 1570–79; and, as late as 1600, Europeans were consuming only a quarter of Asian pepper output (Findley and O'Rourke 2007: 157).

But if we consider all these facts together, without ignoring Europe's intra-trade system and its overall contribution to world trade, it would seem that, although Frank may have demonstrated, at most, that some degree of economic integration did exist within the world, particularly

in terms of the flow of bullion, there really was no world economy without a hyphen dominated by China (Asia). As Peer Vries has pointed out recently, much of the New World silver that ended up in China was brought to them "because it yielded Westerners huge profits when they exchanged it for gold" (2008: 6–49). In other words, Europeans benefitted from the so-called "drain of silver" to China insofar as they obtained gold and other goods in exchange. This is simple economics. Vries also observes that the bulk of the globe's gold production "went to Western Europe and stayed there." Moreover, much of China's exports were not manufactured goods but raw goods, raw silk, gold, drugs and tea. It would indeed have been more accurate to say that they were two major world-economies — an Asian and a European one, with the latter one *increasingly* playing the primary role. China's intercontinental trade, to be sure, was extremely low, less than one percent of its GDP, whereas Europe's transatlantic trade, in 1770, was three times as large as that between Western Europe and Asia at large.[4]

Frank, however, is so adamant about his thesis that even when he cites Holfrerich's (1989) figure according to which the European share of all world trade was 69 percent and 72 percent in 1720 and 1750 respectively — one of the few "falsifying" facts he considers — he simply responds that "this unabashedly Eurocentric claim is disconfirmed by the evidence discussed in the present book" (183). Well, *Re-Orient* offers no evidence against this specific fact. This compels me to point to a simple yet damaging flaw in Frank's book (and, as we will see in the next chapters, in revisionist-multicultural literature at large): the Baconian assumption that one is genuinely scientific so long as one's theory has been built up inductively by gathering evidence in one's favor. Frank forgot, or refused to consider, the well-known Popperian idea that a theory should always be presented as a hypothesis for which one then searches for counter-evidence, rather than just evidence that supports it. (It should become evident in the course of the next chapters that this is a rather common trait of the revisionist school.)

[4] Vries notes that the "silver sink" argument is now widely used as an example to show that Europe was backward as compared to a worldly and affluent China, by Hobson (2004), Marks (2002), John and William McNeill (2003), and Christian (2005).

The Role of Colonial Profits

This problem persists right through the second major argument of the book, addressed to the question that has occupied the lifetimes of numerous historians and social scientists: why did an Industrial Revolution occur first in Europe? As revised by Frank: if Asia was more advanced in 1400–1750, why did Europe begin to outdistance Asia after 1750–1800? Frank's response, which includes an examination of a whole range of other subsidiary questions, comes in the bold way readers have come to expect from him. He approaches the question using the theory of long waves, and speaks of a major "A" phase of world expansion from AD 1000–1050 to 1250–3000, followed by a "B" phase contraction from 1250 to 1450, followed by a new "A" phase expansion after 1450. In both of these "A" phases, he observes, China was the center of world expansion. The post-1450 growth phase lasted into the 18th century, followed by a "B" phase contraction after 1800. Now, this long post-1450 expansive cycle, like any other long wave, experienced a Kondratieff "B" phase downturn in the 17th century, one that hit the "weaker" European economy harder than it did Asia. But another Kondratieff "B" cycle that hit after the 1760s gave Europe the *lucky* chance to overcome its (still) marginal position in the world economy. So, what were the opportunities that Europe had? They were, Frank argues, 1) a favorable endowment of natural resources, *i.e.*, cheap supplies of coal and other essential raw materials and foodstuffs imported from the colonies, and 2) a set of beneficial (world) prices, in the form of higher wages and cheap sources of capital, which gave Europe both the means and the incentive to invest in new technologies.

According to Frank, oceanic commerce generated most of the capital funds and cheap resources required to finance the industrial revolution. Unfortunately, Frank hardly addresses the many serious empirical problems this view has encountered over the decades. He does mention in passing a few counter-arguments, and even appears, at one point, to take seriously Patrick O'Brien's disquieting calculation (1990) that the profits derived from the colonial trade amounted to no more than 2 percent of Europe's GNP in the late 18th century.[5] Nonetheless,

[5] O'Brien originally presented this calculation in a well-known article, "European Economic Development: The Contribution of the Periphery" (1982).

later in the book, Frank more or less dismisses O'Brien's evidence, citing approvingly the rather paltry and dated sources of Eric Williams (1966), Ernest Mandel (1968), and Deane (1965), all of whom elevated the colonial trade to a primary cause.

This is simply not enough; Frank ignores many empirically based arguments showing, for instance, that the profits from the colonial trade between Europe and the Americas were too small to have contributed much to capital formation in the period leading to the industrial revolution, or that the slave trade and the plantation sector in general were no more uniquely important to the industrialization process than were many other home industries in 18th century Britain. As Barbara Solow and Stanley Engerman (1987: 10) concluded in their introductory chapter to a volume consisting of papers presented at a 1984 conference on the legacy of Eric Williams: while the triangular trade played "an active role in [the] pattern and timing" of industrialization, it was neither necessary nor sufficient for the industrialization of Western Europe. This moderate position is quite revealing. For if Solow had earlier dedicated much of her scholarly energy emphasizing the importance of slavery "for British economic growth" (1987: 73), Engerman had downplayed the contribution of slave profits to British capital formation, estimating that in 1770 the profits from the slave trade amounted to a mere 0.54 percent of British national income, and 7.8 percent of total investment. O'Brien (1982), too, had earlier minimized the colonial trade as an "insignificant part of the explanation for the accelerated rate of economic growth experienced by the core after 1750" (3). But later, O'Brien (1991) went on to adopt a more balanced position, according to which "the significance of trade was neither as expendable as cliometricians suggest nor as overwhelming as Wallerstein, Braudel and the World Systems school implicitly assume" (310).

In what may be one of the most authoritative assessments of the contribution of the colonial trade to British industrialization, O'Brien and Engerman also co-authored a paper in which they acknowledged that their earlier efforts to express the value of the colonial trade as a proportion of national income was "almost calculated to create an impression of insignificance" (1991: 178). They decided instead to examine the export sector within the context "of a dynamic general equilibrium model" tying the contribution of exports to the cycles of growth of the British economy during the 1700s. They concluded the following: a) up to 95 percent of the increment to the volume of total

exports from 1700–1 to 1772–3 was sold in colonial markets; b) while the vast proportion of national output was consumed by the home market, over one-fifth of the increment to national output over the period 1783–1802 was sold abroad; and, c) in 1801 the most dynamic and innovative industries, cotton, woolens, and metallurgy, exported 62, 35, and 24 percent, respectively, of their gross output.

In this article, O'Brien and Engerman also mounted a persuasive critique against Thomas and McCloskey's (1981) contention that removing the export sector (say, in 1801 when the ratio of *total* exports to national income was 15.7 percent) would not have resulted in a lowering of national income by that same amount since all commodities in a market are substitutes, and resources not used in the export sector would have found employment elsewhere. They argued that the costs of producing substitutes for tropical goods like sugar and tea, and for raw materials like cotton and dyestuffs, not to forget such key products as copper, hemp, tar and timber obtained via the re-export trade, would have been much higher. They also questioned the assumption that those employed in the export sector (numbering between 40 percent and 50 percent of the non-agricultural workforce) would have found alternative sources of employment without any negative effects on the rates of capital formation. They concluded that "domestic exports [were] clearly important and necessary components of the industrial growth that occurred in Britain over the eighteenth century" (207).

Nonetheless, in other publications O'Brien (1991) and Engerman 1994) were careful not to exaggerate the gains from the *colonial* trade. O'Brien, for one, concluded that "the connexions from the world economy to the industrial revolution are not nearly strong enough to seriously weaken the present 'Eurocentric' consensus' that its mainsprings are to be found within and not beyond the continent" (1991: 305) – a view he reached after making full use of earlier studies and considering a multitude of facts presented by both sides in this debate.

Using O'Brien and other sources, we may sum up the statistical basis of this "Eurocentric consensus" in two statements: First, when we consider *all* foreign markets, we find that, in 1700, Britain exported about 8.4 percent of its national product, a figure which grew to 14.6 percent in 1760, dropped to 9.4 percent in 1780, and then increased to about 15.7 percent in 1801 (Engerman 1994). This is to say that, between 1700 and 1801, only 8.4–15.7 percent of any change in national income can be accounted by *total* foreign trade. Yet we know that the colonial trade, although growing in proportion, remained a small percentage of

Britain's foreign trade during this century. Thus, if we were to use Bairoch's calculations, we find that, in the period between 1720 and 1780–90, foreign trade provided Britain with 4–8 percent of its total demand, but that the trade "with non-European countries represented some 33–9 percent of total British trade, so that the contribution of the future less developed countries could have absorbed, at most, 2–3 percent of total demand" (1993: 82). Consider also that, without its colonial markets, the English home market would have absorbed *some* of the resources used in this sector, or a proportion of the resources would have found employment elsewhere.[6] And second, even if we were to take cotton, the one industry whose development was intimately linked to oceanic trade, in that it obtained "all its raw materials from abroad" (Hobsbawm, 1962: 54) and, by 1800, accounted for a quarter of all British exports (Frank: 291; Braudel 1984: 572), we find, nevertheless, that cotton represented only 1 percent of industrial production in 1770 (Guttman, 1988: 120), and "as late as 1841 [it] still accounted for only 7 percent of Britain's gross national product (O'Brien, 1991: 302). Finally, even if we were to agree that cotton was responsible for the takeoff (Inikori 1989), we have to consider the nature of the British internal economy and its ability to respond to the stimulus of external trade; as history shows, many countries have been unable to achieve sustained growth despite high ratios of external trade, simply because they lacked the political, cultural, and technological conditions to do so. Colonial trade profits were neither sufficient nor necessary for the industrialization of Western Europe/England; the revolution "would have taken place without it" (Landes 1998: 120–121). On the other hand, this trade was not "insignificant;" it did affect the timing, magnitude, and rate of change of industrialization (Solow and Engerman 1987).[7]

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[6] As McCloskey (1994) reminds us, "exports are not the same as new income. They are new markets, not new income." This claim should be qualified — certainly not rejected — by Solow's (1987) argument that the triangular trade, by relying on slavery and the introduction of a more elastic (and cheap) supply of labor, did more than just redirect markets from equally productive channels.

[7] Blaut (1989; 1993), Darity (1982, 1992), and Inikori (1987; 1989) are not part of this consensus as they continue to insist that the West industrialized because it extracted wealth from the periphery. Frank's argument would have benefited from a more systematic use of these sources, rather than relying on the outdated sources I mentioned above. I believe in "classic" works when it comes to ideas and influential views, but when it comes to debates that hinge on quantitative evidence it is a must to keep abreast of new findings. When Frank cites Deane's well-known book,

Trade, Power, and *Liberty: the Secret of British Imperial Success*

Findley and O'Rourke have recently put together a highly effective argument favoring the view that the British Industrial Revolution was "in large measure" explained by her links with the rest of the world. Their book, *Power and Plenty: Trade, War, and the World Economy in the Second Millennium* (2007) has been broadly acclaimed for its "grand sweep," its "scholarly depth," and its ability "to avoid a Eurocentric stance." This book is all the more persuasive for its seemingly impartial effort to find a middle ground between the "Sinocentric" perspective of Frank, Wong, and Pomeranz, and the older Eurocentric consensus. The book cites approvingly the research of O'Brien and Engerman, including similar findings, but it goes further in accentuating that "the growing network of world trade" (and the New World in particular) was the medium within which Europe achieved a "breakthrough to modernity" (226). In the absence of the importation of ever-increasing quantities of food and raw materials from the New World, the authors insist, Europe would not have been able to sustain the Industrial Revolution. The book's argument is indeed quite consistent with the ideological aims of the current multicultural orthodoxy in the eagerness with which it seeks to avoid what it sees as the "purely [sic] domestic accounts of the 'Rise of the West' " (xx). The difference is that, for Findley and O'Rourke, "the European advantage over Asia had been slowly building up over a long period," (362) before Europe's take-off to modern growth. They maintain that Asia's technological gap with Western Europe was discernible sometime in the seventeenth century. They also agree with Robert Allen's calculations (2001) that living standards were already considerably higher in northwest Europe by 1800. Still, the major theme running through this book, in regards to the rise of the West, is that the crucial driving force behind Europe's modernization was her connections to the rest of the world.

The First Industrial Revolution (1965), as elaborating six ways in which foreign trade precipitated the revolution (ways that Frank actually forgets to mention), he is inattentive to the fact that Deane (1996) has recently abandoned this view for a more eclectic interpretation in which foreign trade is conceived as just one factor among many other (internal) factors. I would thus add Deane to the "Eurocentric consensus"; also Richardson (1987) — not to forget quite a few Marxists beginning with Dobb (1968), Hilton (1990), Brenner (1976; 1982), and Anderson (1974) all of whom pointed to transformations inside Europe.

Their basic idea – though they never present it in clear-cut terms – is that trade with the New World was a crucially dynamic component of Europe's overall commercial and industrial performance. The industrialization process cannot be neatly calculated apart from the colonial trade. They cite Cuenca Esteban's finding (1997) that exports accounted for a steadily rising share of British industrial output: for 13 percent of industrial output in 1700, for 18 percent in 1760, for 40 percent in 1801, and for 49 percent in 1831 (330). They insist that the importation of raw cotton from the New World was critical not only in its dramatic increase from 16 million pounds in 1784–86 to 803 million pounds in 1854–56 (334), but in its forward and backward linkages with innovations, urbanization, and wage-earning employment. The importance of the "triangular trade" was not just in the profits obtained directly from the slave trade and the plantations; it was also in the earnings gained from the re-export of colonial goods to the rest of the world. By 1815, about 60 percent of the output of the cotton textiles was being exported. Between 1780 and 1801 the Americas accounted for about 60 percent of additional British exports (345). They also make the following counter-factual argument: "If British industry had been forced to source its raw materials domestically, rather than import them, this would have implied a rapidly increasing cost of raw materials, as increasing levels of demand came face to face with a limited domestic land endowment" (342).They conclude that, in the absence of the vast land endowments Britain acquired from the New World, she would not have been able to pull decisively away from the Malthusian pressures of overpopulation and resource scarcities.

These points are very persuasive. I shall challenge them in detail in the next chapter in the context of Pomeranz's closely aligned arguments. These points merely illustrate that England was increasingly connected to a global trade network; they do not demonstrate that the industrialization of England was inertly parasitic on this trade. Britain's imperial acquisitions and colonial gains were not charitable donations. Academics are so preoccupied with the moral implications of the slave trade, the plunder of resources, and the use of violence in the enforcement of mercantilist trade arrangements, that they cannot see the obvious: Britain *earned* her riches through her own virtues and talents as a nation that deliberately set out to achieve imperial greatness. It was Britain's development of the best navy in the world, civil institutions, administrative and financial reforms that made it possible for her, in the first instance, to seize upon and appropriate raw materials and slaves in faraway lands.

It is not that Findley and O'Rourke are unaware that the European contest for world trade primacy was a military contest in the same breath. The title of their book, *Power and Plenty*, is meant to indicate that "British military success over the French and other rivals was an important ingredient in explaining her subsequent rise to economic prominence" (345). They pay diligent attention to the fact that the British army and navy trebled in size between 1688 and 1780, that the British National Debt expanded from 16.7 million pounds in 1697 to 132 million pounds in 1763 – and to other "extraordinary war-fighting capabilities of the eighteenth century British fiscal-military state" (256). But these facts are hardly narrated in a mood of appreciation. They are recounted for rather different reasons: First, to inform seemingly naïve students (who may think that the history of Europe was one of peaceful parliamentary debates) that "violence undoubtedly mattered" (xx) in the making of Western modernity; second, to replace the so-called Whiggish legend that Britain's success in trade was linked "with the freedom of her constitution" (347) with the empirically-based argument that it was linked with "a willingness to slaughter" (360); and, third, to challenge "stereotypical depictions of Asian 'Leviathan' states as compared with limited European governments" (356).

Let us forget for the moment that China did not industrialize in spite of her "spectacular" imperial expansion in the eighteenth century and despite her "formidable military [state] machine" (355–6). As they write in the preface, the basic message Findley and O'Rourke wish to put across is that explanations "emphasizing Western institutions, cultural attributes, or endowments are hopelessly inadequate," not only because they ignore global interactions but because they create the impression that European nations, and Britain in particular, were modern liberal societies enjoying some internally generated superiority (xx). Accordingly, they join with Allen (2006) and Clark (1996) "in doubting whether British success can really be attributed to *superior* institutions, put in place by the Glorious Revolution, which *supposedly* placed limits on government, secured property rights there, and thus facilitated investment and growth" (349, my italics). They argue that, contrary to the classical liberal interpretation of economic history, the British people were not governed by a small state; rather, they were ruled by a "naval-industrial complex" which extracted far more from each taxpayer than did the absolutist state of France and the "despotic" states of Asia. They point to the findings of O'Brien (1988) and other scholars, which show, for example, that the period after the Glorious Revolution saw a striking expansion in the taxes extracted by the state,

with the result that British taxation accounted for about 20 percent of national income during much of the eighteenth century, as compared to the take of the French government which stood at about 10 and 13 percent, and of the Qing dynasty which was between 4 and 8 percent. They also argue that a vast proportion of British government expenditure – 83 percent according to some estimates – was for military purposes (349–57). In response to the question "why Asia did not rise," they push aside any emphasis on the "supposedly" liberal representative institutions of Europe by pointing, additionally, to the "more" liberal economic atmosphere of the Indian Ocean before the Europeans came with their mercantilist restrictions and gunned ships.

I will clarify, first, that the point of contention is not whether we can discern a clear causal link between Britain's liberal institutions (security of property, freedom of the press, parliamentary representation) and, say, her higher productivity rates. The point is whether England's liberal institutions created a citizenry willing to pay high taxes insomuch as tax-payers had the "right to participate in the political process that ultimately determined how those taxes would be administered and spent." The irony is that these words come from Findley and O'Rourke (350). They even cite a long passage from Hoffman and Norberg (1994) which contains the following words:

> In the end, representative institutions, not absolute monarchy, proved superior in revenue extraction…liberty was a necessary precondition for the emergence of a strong state, a state of wealth and power" (350).

But they are so preoccupied with challenging the Whiggish interpretation, and advancing the cliché of a British "military-industrial complex" that they focus almost entirely on those parts of this passage criticizing the idea that small government and low taxes were responsible for British success.

Findley and O'Rourke know that the British Empire could not but have been acquired by a militaristic state; and so the pertinent question should not be how the Glorious Revolution may have impacted "on total factor productivity growth" (as Clark says), as it should about its contribution (or not) to the creation of a state superior in revenue extraction, superior in the conduct of naval warfare and in the acquisition of colonies. The recently released book by Steve Pincus, *1688: The First Modern Revolution* (2009) persuasively shows how England's burgeoning commercial classes played the strongest role in shaping the economic and military agenda after the revolution. Prior to the revolution, James II tried to develop a modernization plan that emphasized

centralized control, repression of dissidents, and territorial empire. But the commercial elites, by contrast, took advantage of the new economic possibilities to create the "first modern state," a militaristic but participatory state, with independent financial institutions and a strong sense of national identity and civil interest. With the establishment of the Bank of England, which expanded credit for the growing mercantile classes and financed England's wars against France, they deliberately created a maritime empire. Thus, while Pincus certainly pays attention to England's flourishing overseas trade, principally the Atlantic trade and its lucrative products with their "multiplier effects," his emphasis is on the "modernizing" society of England, its growing urbanity, its expanding infrastructure of roads, ports, and canals, its efficient postal system and insurance companies, its coffeehouses and retail shops, and its widely tolerant political atmosphere.

A number of empirical flaws can be elaborated against Findley and O'Rourke's claim that "Europe's links with the rest of the world were crucial in explaining its own development" (358). These include, as I shall expand upon in the next chapter, the following three points: First, the observation that the costs of Empire (in people, taxes, and warfare) may have surpassed the benefits; second, Spain acquired enormous tracts of land but ended up poor and undeveloped, and; third, countries like Switzerland, Germany and Japan, ended up extremely wealthy even though they lacked colonial annexations. But there is, in my view, a deep-seated error to this claim, and it lies in the portrayal of Europeans as passive rather than as active agents. World systems theorists recognize the actions of "core" states, but only as reflexive reactions to the structural dynamics of world capitalism. The world system is ultimately conceived as the active (structural) entity determining a country's developmental possibilities. Findley and O'Rourke are not followers of Wallerstein; in their efforts to explain the varying ways in which states were actively involved in creating their own connections to the global economy they look inside the parts, inside the states. They stress the British fiscal military state. My point, however, is not only that we should pay more attention to politics and institutions. This argument has already been made by Vries against the revisionists. He refers to the "agency" of "superstructural" phenomena. In fact, as we shall see in chapter 4, Hobson and Mielants concentrate directly on the fiscal-military state as the one "genuinely" (Pomeranz's word) internal advantage European states enjoyed over the more peaceful and moderate Chinese state. Vries thinks it would be "constructive" to integrate this dimension of

Hobson's work, including Wallerstein's own emphasis on powerful "core" states, with the revisionist emphasis on economic matters. But this has already been done. Marxists have always emphasized politics and power. Strong critics of the revisionists, such as Joseph Bryant and Robert Brenner, are heavily influenced by a Marxist perspective in which the rise of the West is seen as a debate about the peculiar dynamics of European political-military power, and thus, effectively, as a debate about the rise of modern European imperialism, "unequal equations of power…colonial settlement and industrialized militarism" (Bryant 2006: 434–5).

There is more to the agency of Europeans besides the role of institutions and culture. The view that all human action is generated or structured in and through society has sunk deep into the mind-set of academics. Many social scientists take it for granted that the task of their research is to explain the mediating structures and frames of meaning within which actors orient their conduct. It is true that economists speak in terms of consumer choices, rational preferences, and cost-benefit analysis. They think in terms of maximizing agents even as they draw attention to the role of institutions in facilitating or obstructing the actions of economic agents. Many sociologists, too, emphasize the motives and reasons humans give for their actions. Max Weber is known as the founder of micro-sociological accounts of social life in emphasizing individual choice and rationality. I accept the basic premise that both agency and structure are important. I agree, for example, with Anthony Giddens's argument (1986) that social praxis should be defined to include the conditions and consequences of historically situated activities and interactions produced through the agency of social actors. But I think that the agency of European actors has to be conceptualized in ways that take into consideration the historically specific context of these actors. It is not enough to point out that all actions take place within a historical context. One should also consider whether some contexts engender actors who are more activated and consciously aware of their contexts. I will argue in later chapters that European actors were more dynamic in the higher degree to which they were able to reflect upon their actions and thus discursively give reasons for them. European actors were less passive or more reflective than non-Europeans in their acculturation to the conventions and beliefs of their society. Paradoxically enough, I will also argue that this greater disposition on the part of Europeans to engage discursively with their mediating surroundings was due to their rootedness

in an aristocratic warlike culture which encouraged the pursuit of individual recognition through one's heroic deeds. In doing so, I will draw on Nietzsche's aristocratic conception of human nature to emphasize, in the words of the French philosopher, Gilles Deleuze, "active man, free and powerful, the man who can promise" – that is, the human agent who can make use of circumstances, not the "reactive man" who is under the tutelage of impersonal forces and random events (2006: 39–72). I will trace the primordial origins of this character back to the uniquely aristocratic culture of Indo-Europeans.

The question is not whether we approve or not of British imperialism. The question is why was the West so dynamic and original in empire-making, warfare, political theory, philosophy, architecture, and poetry? Why was it that the same England that created the greatest maritime empire in history cultivated religious toleration, freedom of expression, and representative government? Findley and O'Rourke are wrong in suggesting that the British state was less liberal than the Qing and Ottoman states. This is regrettable; no idea resonated more strongly in the minds of David Hume, John Locke, Edmund Burke, and Samuel Johnson than liberty. The profits from slavery do not make the language of liberty hypocritical. Johnson detested slavery and slave owners:

> Inhabitants of this island can neither gain riches nor power by taking away the liberty of any part of the human species…No man is by nature the property of another (in Lipking and Noggle 2006: 2849).

It was the language of liberalism and natural rights that provided the terms in which a growing number of injustices and abridgements of rights were actually attacked. The British abolitionist movement gained enthusiasm in the 1780s as Britain's power was reaching its peak. In 1807 the British Parliament outlawed slavery in the Empire; the first nation to do so in history. Why? These are the kind of questions I shall address in later chapters.

China's "high-level equilibrium trap"

What about Frank's other claim that it was Europe's higher wage costs relative to Asia's that stimulated the innovations leading to the mechanization of the 18th century? Here the reader will look in vain for evidence about labor cost trends in England (Europe), except for a few references to Adam Smith and Braudel, and some references to

Wallerstein and others about the less expensive and more skilled workforce of Asia (287–91). We can agree that labor was more expensive in England than Asia, but Frank offers no evidence indicating that wages were *rising* in England *before* the onset of the industrial revolution. In the next chapter I will consider the long debate on the living standards of English workers during the Industrial Revolution. Let me simply say now that Frank could have consulted some important papers arguing that real wages remained more or less constant between 1790 and 1820, but that after 1820 they started to rise steadily (Flinn 1974; von Tunzelmann 1979). Lindert and Williamson (1983) even went so far as to argue that "real wages … nearly doubled between 1820 and 1850" – far too optimistic a conclusion for Feinstein (1998), who estimated that average real wages increased by about 30 percent between 1780 and 1850. Still, altogether these findings were a correction upwards to Hobsbawm's (1975: 259) well known insistence that "there is not much evidence that real wages in Europe began to go up significantly until the later part of the 1860s," and that it was the export market which filled the lack of home demand.[8]

But – and this is a more serious objection – how can one write of Europe's position in the world market as both a high wage and a low per capita productivity region, and of China as both a low wage and high productivity region? Apart from what I cited above on the lower performance of Europe's pre-1750 economy, no explanations are offered by Frank as to how Europe was able to achieve higher wages/incomes than Asia with less developed productive techniques. What he does is to ask why China did not mechanize in the way Europe did. And he answers that China's decision to continue to rely on its old technology was "rational" given its high supply of cheap labor. Indeed this cheaper supply of labor was due to China's more efficient agrarian system which, by providing cheap and plentiful foodstuffs, allowed wages to stay low:

> No matter through what institutional mechanisms those cheap subsistence wage goods were or were not distributed, they could only have been made available by an agriculture that was more productive and thereby

[8] Of course, whether the distribution of income changed to the benefit of lower income groups is another issue; see Williamson's (1985) argument that, while the standard of living of British workers increased, there was a growing concentration of wealth and property from the late 17th century onwards until about the middle of the 19th century.

> able to produce those wage goods cheaper in China than in Britain and Europe (307).

This argument includes two additional interconnected claims. First, that China, as the greatest beneficiary of the long post-1400 growth "A" phase, and a resulting faster population growth, had a demographic/land-resource ratio of 3.6–3.8 inhabitants per hectare as compared to England's 1.5 or France's 1.1 in 1770 — a fact that also kept or pushed wages down (308). Second, that the post-1400 prosperity that China enjoyed also "polarized the distribution of income and thereby constrained effective domestic demand of mass consumer goods" (301), which in turn discouraged investment in new technologies.

But the burden of these conflicting claims proves too difficult to uphold. To start with the latter claim, how would a long period of economic expansion lead to impoverishment/polarization and lack of effective demand? Frank believes that such growth led to increases in population, decreases in land resources, and thus to polarization. But Frank tiptoes as well into the idea that much of the newly created wealth was diverted into the pockets of the elites. Regarding India, he observes that "its governing class got much of its wealth through the expropriation of the surplus produced by the peasantry" (306). He thus implies that, one, the masses of Asia were indeed poorer than those of Europe (where wages were higher); and, two, the phase "A" growth of Asia may have been achieved through increased exploitation of the peasantry and/or extensive growth, rather than through more productive techniques.

Frank, it would seem, wants the best of all possible worlds for China. The problem is that once we investigate the first point further, what Frank details about it, and what other sources tell us, his entire argument is proven to be untenable, or at least unfinished and not properly supported by the evidence. It becomes obvious that China's post-1400 expansion was mainly *extensive,* in the sense that both total economic output and population were increasing at about the same rate with no increases in output per capita. And, conversely, that England did in fact experience a long process of incremental but steady increases in (agricultural) productivity from 1500 onwards. Knowing more about the second point, however, requires a careful assessment of Frank's use of Mark Elvin's (1973) "high-level equilibrium trap" hypothesis about the failure of late traditional China's economy.

The "Geographical Limits" of China's Post-1400 Extensive Growth

Let me first draw attention to the distinction E. L. Jones makes between "extensive" and "intensive" growth in *Growth Recurring, Economic Change in World History* (1988). Jones defines the former as a situation in which total output and population are increasing at about the same rate, and the latter as a situation in which output per capita or productivity is rising. He argues that we can detect empirically, in the course of history, continuous extensive growth but not continuous increases in productivity. Historical transitions from extensive to intensive growth are very rare and depend on a whole set of institutional (and I would add geographical–ecological) factors. Only three cases of intensive growth, Jones explains, can be found in world history: Sung China from the 10th to the 13th centuries, Tokugawa Japan from 1600 to 1868 and early Modern Europe from 1500.

The most sensible scholarly view, as I see it, is that Sung China (960–1275 AD), after undergoing the greatest innovative outburst the world had seen to that point, and experiencing a rise in per capita income of about a third, continued to grow thereafter, but without further improvements in per capita income (Maddison 1998). Many scholars also agree that, by 1800, if not earlier, the potential for further extensive growth in China had declined sharply. Was 18th century China, then, *entering* another predictable Malthusian crisis? No, it was entering a "high-level equilibrium trap" – or so Marc Elvin has argued. On the surface Elvin's high-level equilibrium trap was more suitable to Frank's argument than a straightforward Malthusian crisis. The logic of a Malthusian crisis is that, in a society living on the margins, continued increases in gross output and population growth, without concomitant increases in labor productivity, will eventually lead to diminishing agricultural returns, resulting in higher food prices, higher labor costs, and stagnation. But according to Elvin's thesis, China's weakness was not lack of capital and wealth. Enough capital was available "to finance the beginnings of an industrial revolution" (Blunder and Elvin 1992: 147; Elvin 1973: 286–288).

The problem was that China had no (rational) incentive to invest in new technology because it had a plentiful supply of cheap labor – a view that Frank adopts. Frank also likes Elvin's argument that it was China's very own prosperity during the post-1400 "A" phase period that had resulted in a high population/low resource-land ratio. But while Frank would have liked to put all the emphasis on a happy

growing population, he finds himself saddled with Elvin's additional claim that China's growth had been extensive, citing Elvin that "a major cause of those shortages was of course the continuing growth of population under conditions of relative technological standstill [that] had all reached a point of sharply diminishing returns by the later 18th century" (302). He even admits, indirectly, that "much of Asian production and export, certainly Chinese silk, was highly labor-intensive to produce under high labor supply/low labor cost conditions. In India also the previous centuries of economic growth and expansion had generated analogous supply and demand relations" (303–4).

So, the Asian "A" prosperity was based on extensive growth. But Frank is still convinced that Asia's agriculture was more efficient or productive than Europe's, and that Asia's low wages were made possible by the availability of cheaply produced food. He is also of the view that Europe's high wages were a result of its inability to produce cheap food. He borrows Esther Boserup's (1981) claim that before 1750 Europe saw no increases in agricultural productivity, and that it was population pressure at that time that had created the incentive for technological change (311). Did China really enjoy a higher per capita income combined with lower wages due to a more efficient agrarian sector? Not according to Elvin, who makes it quite clear that China was suffering from lack of effective demand due to a low per capita income due to declining agricultural returns. Indeed, it was not just cheap labor but increasingly scarce and expensive resources that had rendered investments in new techniques uneconomical *and* unfeasible. This is what the "trap" was all about: China's post-1400 extensive growth could not continue without substantial innovations, yet such innovations were not cost-effective because of a combination of cheap labor, lack of demand, and diminishing/high-priced resources.[9]

But we still need to answer the question why China's extensive agricultural growth could provide such cheap foodstuffs. We can start

[9] Other commentators have missed this combination. Thus Joel Mokyr says that Elvin's "trap" involves a "circular logic" insofar as it holds that innovation was unprofitable due to declining incomes without realizing that innovations would have increased incomes and therefore made such investments worthwhile (1990: 225). But this criticism forgets the problem of scarce/expensive resources. Perry Anderson, on the other hand, criticizes Elvin for begging the question as to "why there was no industrial revolution in the towns, to provide scientific inputs for agriculture," forgetting the problem of declining incomes and lack of demand (1987: 542). See Elvin (1984) for a clear and concise presentation of his thesis.

with a hint from Adam Smith, the sole European classical thinker who escapes Frank's wrath, and whom he cites on numerous occasions to back up his arguments. Smith's observations about India can be applied to China:

> In rice countries, which generally yield two, sometimes three crops in the year, each of them more plentiful than any common crop of corn, the abundance of food must be much greater than in any corn country of equal extent… The precious metals, therefore, would naturally exchange in India… for a much greater quantity than in Europe. The money price … of food, the first of all necessaries [would be] a great deal lower in the one country than the other.

Once rice was adapted to a semi-aquatic system of cultivation, and the opportunities offered by the highly fertile silt of the Yangtze River were fully exploited between the 8th and 13th centuries, and early ripening seeds were introduced, this grain could yield two to three harvests every year, and provide a cheaper source of food than wheat. However, this passage is taken from Prasannan Parthasarathi's article, "Rethinking Wages and Competitiveness in the Eighteenth Century: Britain and South India" (1998), the argument of which is that "agricultural productivity, not oppressed labourers, was the secret to South Asia's preeminent position in the world textile trade" (102). Parthasarathi does not think that India's higher productivity (and cheaper food) had much to do with the superior output-to-seed ratio that wet-rice (naturally) enjoyed over wheat. While he does say at one point that this "difference [in productivity] was due in part to the intrinsic qualities of rice, which crops more abundantly than wheat," he adds that "we must not underestimate the importance of the sophisticated cultivation regime in South India," concluding without equivocation that "South Asian textiles owed their competitiveness to the superior productivity of Indian agriculture. In Europe, industrialization was a means to overcome relative agricultural backwardness." I would agree that the cultivation of rice in Asia (Grigg 1988: 75–83) was a highly sophisticated undertaking, requiring the coordination of many tasks, like the "choice of seed and cropping pattern, the ploughing, irrigating, and fertilizing of fields, the transplanting, weeding, harvesting, winnowing, and drying of the crop" (Fairbank 1992: 170). Indeed, the economic revolution that swept over Sung China, and which led to sharply higher yields per unit of cultivated land, was obviously not given only by the discovery of a variety of early ripening rice, or by the naturally fertile Yangtze river, but was based on new knowledge, new farming tools,

better hydraulic techniques and better preparation of soil and methods of soil conservation. From ancient times, Chinese farmers had outperformed Europeans with respect to land productivity.

In this respect, I agree with those who object to the to the claim that Europe alone developed in the Middle Ages a uniquely "intensive" system of cultivation. Reading Michael Mann's *The Sources of Social Power* (1986) one would never know that China's agrarian system was considerably more efficient and productive (certainly as far as output per acre was concerned) than Europe's, not only in the medieval era but right through the eighteenth century. Mann follows, without reservations, the earlier accounts of Lynn White (1962) that "medieval Europeans were primarily concerned with intensively exploiting their own locality, [penetrating] deeper into heavier, wetter, soils than any previous agrarian people." He thinks that Europeans "alone" followed a path of "intensive" cultivation and steady increases in productivity through the systematic diffusion of the heavy iron plough, three-field system, horseshoe, shoulder harness, and water mill (Mann 1986: 412).

In China, under irrigation, both wheat and rice gave far higher yields than the rain-fed grains of Europe. Compared with the yields per seed, as estimated by Slicher van Bath (1963), for medieval and modern England (1200/49….4:1; 1500/1699…7:1; 1750/1850…10:1), the yields obtained in modern pre-industrial China were really outstanding: 20:1 or even 30:1 (Bray 1984: 7–8, 476). Iron plowshares, both of iron set over wood and solid iron, with sturdy square frames and different kinds of mould-boards, were available in China as early as the first and second centuries BC. The celebrated shoulder harness of medieval Europe was invented in China by the first century BC (Bray 1984; Temple 1986). In terms of preparation of soil, methods of soil preservation, including rotation of crops, selective breeding of seeds, and techniques of water control, Chinese farmers were the most gifted in the world.

But we need to remember as well that the Chinese agrarian regime both promoted high densities of population and demanded immense inputs of labor. Unlike maize cultivation in Mesoamerica, for example, which required little effort and kept laborers busy for a small part of the year, Braudel observes that rice "holds the world record for the amount of man-handling it requires" (1981: 145). We need therefore to pay attention to the productivity of Chinese labor. Productivity calculated in terms of yield per seed, including yield per unit of cultivated land, is only a partial guide to understanding the long run performance

of an agrarian system, since these two indices give us a measure of *land* productivity rather than *labor* productivity. We need to ask whether China's *yield per farmer* was improving or declining. We also need to ask whether the steady growth of total agricultural output from 1400 to 1800, without sustained increases in labor productivity, could forever obviate the law of diminishing *land* returns.[10]

There is strong agreement among scholars that, from the 13th to the 18th century, grain output remained more or less stable on a per capita basis. Angus Maddison (1998: 25) has "guesstimated" that the level of Chinese GDP per capita from 1280 to 1700 was roughly stable at $600 (in 1990 dollars). He cites Dwight Perkins's estimate that total grain output increased by a factor of 5.3 from 1400 to 1820, which was about the same proportion as the increase in population (which rose from 72 million to 381 million). Scholars have also noted that after the Sung epoch there were few new farming implements that were labor-saving in nature (Chao 1986: 194–195, 224); and that the increases in total output were due to the extension of double-cropping or the multi-cropping of rice, wheat and barley, the application of more labor per unit of land, the colonization of marginal lands, and the introduction of new crops like peanuts, maize, and potatoes (see Perkins 1969; Blunden and Elvin 1992; Elvin 1973; Mokyr 1990; Fairbank 1992; Landes 1998).

Although I am tempted to agree with Maddison (1998: 33) that some of these improvements "should be recognized as technological progress," I would add with Kang Chao that these were *labor-using* innovations, *not labor-saving* ones (1986: 21–23). The spread of double-cropping was indeed "progress" in so far as it raised the amount of grain that could be obtained from a given area and allowed for a growing population, but this improvement was accomplished through the extension of the number of working days per year. Ensuring a second

[10] Chaudhuri writes that "the lower labor input of wheat was more than offset by its less caloric value in relation to yield" (1990: 235). On the other hand, it is worth keeping in mind that the protein content of rice was about half as high as that of wheat, rye, and oats. Over 90 percent of the calories in China were provided by cereal grains (Bray 1984: 3–4). Dairy products and occasional meat were part of the European diet. While in Europe a large percentage of the farmland consisted of permanent pastures and meadows, in southern China every piece of land suitable for crop production was dedicated to wet rice cultivation with little or no room left for livestock, and thus for meat and dairy products, though protein was supplemented by soybeans and fish farming.

harvest required a new round of ploughing, leveling, manuring and flooding soon after the first crop. Multi-cropping, too, involved increased demands on labor (particularly for the preparation of the ground for new types of grains). Likewise, low quality land (as in the northeast) was made suitable for crops only with large expenditures on irrigation works and the like. Thus, we have reason to believe that, in China, the prolonged increases in land productivity, from 1400 to 1800, achieved with the same set of farm implements, was coming together with a gradual decline in labor productivity. According to Chao, this result came about due to a slow declining trend in per capita grain output and was one that occurred "long before the eighteenth century, perhaps as early as the fifteenth century" (1986: 216–217).[11]

This is likewise the reality Philip Huang (1990: 8–13) saw in the Qing era in the core economic region of the Yangzi Delta. The marginal returns per each extra input of labor were decreasing. While peasant households were able to meet their consumption needs, and even increase the total annual income of the family – by increasing the workdays per year and the hours of work per day, as well as the labor inputs of children, women, and grandparents – the marginal returns per unit of labor were declining.[12]

Moreover, while not everyone is satisfied with the details of Elvin's "trap," there is strong agreement that China's post-1400 extensive growth, based on increases in land productivity, was facing diminishing returns per farmland and a "geographical limit of expansion" by the 1800s (Bray 1984: 601). The almost indefinite capacity of rice farming to render higher yields through the fine-tuning of all the methods of cultivation was reaching an absolute limit to growth. For thousands of years Chinese farmers had successfully exploited their best lands and continually improved their land productivity with new inputs of labor, new methods of water control, and new crop varieties. But with over 300 million people at the end of the eighteenth century, "China had begun to run out of readily cultivable land" (Perkins 1969: 27). "With the exception of Manchuria, there was no significant amount of accessible but still unused land of farmable quality" (Elvin 1988: 105). Thus, according to Chao, after the 17th century, the per capita acreage

[11] The data Chao offers is far from complete; suffice it to say that, taking the 11th century as 100, he calculates the indices of per capita output for the years 1812 and 1882 to be, respectively, 83 and 70 (217).

[12] Fairbank (1992) calls this situation "paradox of growth without development."

of farmland in China had begun to oscillate around a descending trend line (Chao: 89, 93, 221). Within these shrinking farms, and within each unit of land, there were fewer and fewer ways to increase land productivity merely by working harder with the existing technology. As Franscesca Bray says in her massive 700-page study of Chinese agriculture, the maximum output that could be obtained per hectare had been reached by 1800 and population growth was finally overtaking agricultural production; "all available arable land had by then been brought under cultivation, and no more significant increases in land productivity could be achieved with traditional methods of production" (Bray 1984: 601, 612). Elvin, too, says that "China in 1800 had come close in most regions to the per-hectare maximum for premodern farming" (1988: 105). It has also been estimated (tentatively) by Perkins (27) that average yields did indeed decline by 22 percent between 1821 and 1911.[13]

Was Eighteenth Century Europe following a Malthusian path?

Now, Frank could *logically* accept these findings and still argue that eighteenth century Europe was in the same Malthusian boat as China, arguing that Europe did not enjoy any marked technological advantages before 1750–1800, and its agriculture (per hectare of cultivated land) was just as, if not less, efficient than China's.[14] This is the argument advanced by Wong in *China Transformed* (1997); a book

[13] Perkins (47–52) recognizes that the adoption of new crops from Europe such as potatoes and corn, which could be grown on poor dry land, delayed the impact of diminishing returns, though he adds that the Chinese really dislike the taste of these crops and hastened their adoption only in the 20th century when they were also adopting European "scientific" agriculture.

[14] Frank is convinced that whatever advantages Europe may have enjoyed, as in naval gunnery, it was only "temporary," "because of the very substantial diffusion of technology" within Eurasia (204). But we cannot take too seriously Frank's comparative treatment of the development of technologies in guns, textiles, metallurgy, ships, printing, and transport, insofar as his analysis amounts to just 10 pages. In chapter four I will argue that China, after about 1300, did not sustain its technological creativity despite periods of continued expansion in total output. It is worth noting here that Irfan Habib's conclusion that "it would be foolish, even if detailed evidence has not been studied, to deny that India during the seventeenth century had been definitely surpassed by Western Europe" (1980: 1). Habib, I might add, is a Marxist Indian nationalist. Mughal India may have been an empire capable of extracting vast revenues from the population to support a sumptuous living style for the elite, but the fact remains that it did not – just like the rest of the Islamic world – introduce such basic innovations as book-printing, mechanical clocks, spectacles, telescopes and iron cannon.

published a year before *Re-Orient*, but which outlined some key components of the Sinocentric challenge. Wong, borrowing elements of E. A. Wrigley's discussion (1989) on the classical economists and their idea that all *organically* based pre-industrial economies have limits to growth because the process of growth is dominated by declining marginal returns to non-mineral resources: "even Europe and China's most advanced regions in the 18th century, England and the lower Yangzi, had not escaped the limits of the economically possible scenarios envisioned by classical economists of the period" (50). While both early modern Europe/England and late imperial China experienced rapid "Smithian" growth, *i.e.*, increases in trade and specialization, proto-industrialization, and cash-crop farming, as well as absolute increases in agricultural output, both saw no sustained increases in per capita grain output, or in labor productivity. *Before* 1800, both England (Europe) and China were following "fundamentally similar dynamics of economic expansion via the market" (52). "Labor intensification accompanied Smithian growth in China as it did in Europe" (30). In both, "real wages over the long run did not change," and life expectancy remained more or less constant.

Thus, in both regions, a Malthusian crisis, according to Wong, was "lurking in the background," as population multiplication continued to press "beyond what their [organic] resource base could support" (17, 42, 45, 69). Only in the nineteenth century proper, with the utilization of coal readily available to England but not to China was England able to diverge economically and circumvent the Malthusian limitations of an economy based on organic raw materials. Clearly, the logic of Wong's line of reasoning cannot but lead him to say that a set of fortuitous factors were ultimately responsible for Europe's eventual divergence from China. If he rejects any privileging of Europe's pre-industrial economy as being uniquely capable of generating an industrial revolution, he must perforce find a contingent factor to explain how Europe was able to break suddenly from the Malthusian limitations of the past; and he thinks that the availability of mineral resources of energy, together with the acquisition of large amounts of resources from the New World were key features of the "initial industrialization process that set parts of Europe off from the rest of Eurasia for much of the nineteenth century" (50).[15]

[15] I shall deal with the role of coal and land-saving resources from the New World in England's industrialization in the next chapter on Pomeranz who offers the most detailed arguments.

Leaving aside for the moment Wrigley's argument that the exploitation of coal as such is essential in overcoming the Malthusian limitations experienced by all organic economies, I think there is more than enough evidence to show that, while in China increases in land productivity were accompanied by decreases in labor productivity, in England increases in land productivity occurred in conjunction with increases in labor productivity. Exactly when British agriculture started to grow in a sustained way is a highly contested issue. Some historians (and I shall bring up other sources and findings in the next chapter in response to the specific arguments of Pomeranz) have observed slow, if irregular, increases in productivity from 1500 onwards, with sustained increases after 1700. Using a "population based" statistical method, Mark Overton has calculated the following increases in *land productivity* in England, simplified as index numbers: (1700 = 100): 1750 = 108, 1800 = 115, 1850 = 207. Employing a "volume based" method, and using the same base, he has estimated the following increases: 1750 = 116, 1800 = 138, l850 = 216 (1996: 77–78).[16] Similar, if more tangible, findings are reviewed in Robert Allen (1996) indicating the following steady improvements in yields per acre: while in 1700 wheat and rye and oat farms typically yielded 16, 17, and 24 bushels per acre, respectively, by 1800 they yielded 21.5, 26, and 35 bushels (1994: 112).

We also find plenty of evidence indicating regular increases in *output per worker* during the 18th century. In his comprehensive study of the recent literature, Overton carefully explains how Wrigley, using the evidence of the proportion of the population engaged in agriculture, computed the following increases in labor productivity (1700 = 100): 1520 = 71, 1600 = 77, 1670 = 89, 1750 = 126, 1801 = 141, 1851 = 197. In addition, we have Nick Crafts' well-known estimate that agricultural productivity increased per year over the periods 1710–40, 1740–80, and 1780–1800 by 0.9 percent, 0.5 percent, and 0.6 percent (1981: 2); together with Wrigley's appraisal of these numbers that they imply "a total increase in output of almost exactly 80 percent over the 90-year period as a whole;" and his additional point that, if we agree that the agricultural population increased by 13 percent over the

[16] The reader may consult Overton for an excellent technical discussion on how these two methods measure land productivity. As we will see in the next paragraph, it is much easier to understand how labor productivity is measured.

century, then the increase in per capita output can be calculated at 59 percent (1989, 170–1).[17]

One should not assume, however, that these increases in productivity were brought on by new farming machinery and the manufacture of nitrogenous fertilizers. Such innovations spread in England only after the 1820s–1850s, not before. Threshing machines powered by steam were common after the mid-19th century; reaping machines were not to be seen until the 1850s; the scythe and seed drills became important only after 1815. Rather, the increases in productivity, it has been argued, were due, first, to the growing diffusion, after 1700, of new root crops like turnips, which replaced fallow and were used to feed animals (and which increased the stock of manure available) and which seem to have been used "on sandy soils to add humus and facilitate wheat cultivation on marginal lands." By 1770, turnips "were already fully diffused" and their proportion in the rotation of crops was large relative to other grain crops (Brunt 1997). Second, there was the effective use of old technologies such as hollow drainage in areas with poor natural drainage, and the generalized use of old fertilizers like liming and marling which corrected soil acidity. Connected to these changes were changes in farm size, in market opportunity, and in existing farms tools, including the lighter "Dutch plough" found in

[17] To cite another source, E. L. Jones calculated that one worker engaged in farming in 1700 fed 1.7 persons, whereas in 1800 one worker fed 2.5 persons (1981: 71). These findings are consistent with the Marxist interpretation of Brenner and Ellen Wood, who otherwise insist "that only English agriculture was uniquely productive" (Wood 1999: 96). Research shows, however, that there were other areas of Europe, like the Netherlands, where agricultural productivity did forge ahead in a sustained way from as early as the 16th century (Vries and Woude 1997: 232–233). France, too, was not that far behind. For a long time the prevailing view of French agriculture was that it was rigid and stagnant from the medieval period until the middle of the 18th century, or even well past 1800. It was believed that French agriculture could barely keep pace with population growth, because it was controlled by small peasant holders who fear the market and had no interest in new techniques. However, this view, advanced by the Annales historians, including Brenner (1976), has been seriously questioned by the "new economic historians." While growth in France tended to be erratic, with regular setbacks, some regions did achieve substantial increases in productivity in the 16th and 17th centuries. Even for France as a whole, Hoffman has detected a 27 percent rise in agricultural output per worker between 1500 and 1800 (1996: 135–36). Synthesizing various estimates from different sources, for different time periods, O'Brien (1996: 217–18) calculated that "between 1520 and 1910 labor productivity probably multiplied 4.7 times in Britain compared to 2.4 in France."

eastern England by 1600, and the light swing-Rotherham plough, cheaper and stronger, patented in 1730 (Bray 1984: 578).

Now, the way I would incorporate Wrigley's argument on the intrinsic limitations of organic economies is to argue that, without the eventual exploitation of mineral sources of energy, the sustained growth England experienced in the 18th century would have been increasingly harder to secure. The point remains, however, that 18th century England was moving away from the Malthusian limitations of the past. Both labor and land productivity were rising slowly but steadily, and they continued to do so under pressure of population growth. England's organic agrarian economy, as demonstrated in the changes outlined above, still had ample room for growth. Between 1550 and around 1800 the British population tripled. From 1731 onwards it grew at a rate "faster than at any other period;" a rate of increase sustained into the 19th century so that "in the 140-year period from 1731 to 1871 the population no less than quadrupled from 5.263 to 21.501 million" (Schofield 1994: 65). At the same time, the proportion of the population working in agriculture decreased from roughly 80 percent of the population in 1500 to just 20 percent by 1850 (Overton 1996, 8). Clearly, one English worker engaged in farming in 1850 could feed more individuals than in 1500 or in 1700. While it is true that, in 1850, food imports were equivalent to 20 percent of the entire output of English agriculture, the agrarian sector was facing a population three times larger than it was in 1750 when England was self-sufficient in food. What is more, and this is a critical point I shall address in the next chapter, this massive demographic expansion did not occasion any decline in living standards. Both population and real wages were increasing from the early nineteenth century onwards (Allen 2001).

Meanwhile, in the case of China, I would go further than Wong and argue that the crisis facing late imperial China was quite unlike the "Malthusian blockages" both Europe and China had experienced earlier at various points in their pre-industrial histories. In those instances, once the proper demographic checks took effect, the blockages were followed by new (bigger) cycles of growth. But it might be reasonably argued that, in 19th century China, after centuries of extensive growth, there was little room or leeway for additional expansion. Save for the introduction of new crops like potatoes and corn, further improvements in wet-rice farming under the old organic technological toolkit (without chemical fertilizers, scientifically selected seeds, and combustion engines) were progressively harder to achieve. In this

sense, China's organic economy was not merely facing another cyclical downturn but was increasingly approaching a *stationary state,* or something close to an *ultimate constraint*. England's organic economy, on the other hand, seemed to have more scope or potential for modification and improvement, at least enough to have actually achieved simultaneous increases in land and labor productivity through the 18th century – just when modern science was ready to be marshaled for agricultural use.

Wong actually misreads Wrigley's argument on the classical economists as implying that 18th century England was encountering limits to growth. What Wrigley deduces from the classical economies is that the use of coal was a "necessary condition" for the growth that occurred during the 19th century, and that, in the long run, all organic economies are bound to experience ultimate constraints on growth. At no point does he suggest that England was saved suddenly from a Malthusian trap due to the fortunate discovery of a pile of coal. He is very clear that "the use of coal had been a striking feature of the English economy during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries" (1994: 34), that "coal output exceeded 10 million tons a year by the end of the eighteenth century" (40), and that the problems associated with converting mineral heat into kinetic energy or motive power had been "readily perceived and gradually overcome" with the "invention and development first of the Newcomen atmospheric engine [1712] and later of Watt's [1769] more powerful and efficient … steam engine" (34), and that these changes were *"progressively liberating* the English economy from the negative feedback that must afflict any organically based economy" (40, italics added).[18]

In fact, elsewhere Wrigley adds that "not only did developments occurring after their lifetime disprove the assumptions of the classical economists, but it also seems doubtful whether *the centuries immediately preceding their era* offer support to the view that declining marginal returns inhibit growth except perhaps on a millennial scale" (1989: 39, my italics). There is no support for this view because, as we have seen above, and as Wrigley now adds here again, "output per

[18] Frank is too careless when he remarks that, in Europe and Britain, "up through most of the eighteenth century, no one used much coal" (202). He also underestimates the use of mechanized power in the mining of coal when he says that this power was used "only since the nineteenth century." See Mokyr (1990: 85) who says that "within a few years of its inception, it [the Newcomen machine] spread to France, Germany, and Belgium, and by 1730 it was operating in Spain, Hungary, and Sweden."

head had roughly doubled in the English agricultural labor force between about 1550 and about 1800, even though the national population tripled over the period" (39).[19]

Was traditional China a Low Fertility Regime?

One central claim attributed to the Eurocentric camp is that Europeans were rational in ensuring higher living standards by practicing celibacy, late marriage, and more widely spaced births, whereas Asians were less rational in marrying early and reproducing without much restraint and without regard for resources. In truth, no historian has argued that Asians were "irrational" in their fertility strategies. Jones is quite clear that both strategies were rationally-based given the respective resource-endowments of Europe and Asia. Europeans made a conscious choice to control population growth "a little below its maximum" so as to maintain their consumption levels "a little above" subsistence. They did so because they were the beneficiaries of an agrarian system which included more livestock, and they saw the possibility of enjoying a slightly higher standard of living by keeping more land for their livestock rather occupying it all for grain cultivation to feed a higher population. In Asia, the role of livestock was not central, and the greater number of natural disasters were such that it made more sense to maximize family size to insure against old age and to help recover from recurrent draughts, earthquakes and famines (2003: 14–17).

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[19] The argument Wong makes that China was, in large part, unable to escape from the constraints of its organic economy because, unlike Europe, it "lacked convenient access to mineral sources of energy that could be harnessed for technologically more efficient forms of production in the most advanced parts of the country" (63; see also Frank : 202) wrongly assumes that the steam technology required to convert mineral heat into mechanized power was somehow created out of the blue when the need for it arose. Newcomen's atmospheric engine was an improvement on Thomas Savary's sunction pump patented in 1698, which in turn was an improvement on an earlier model built in 1691 by the French Denis Papin who had learned about the up and down movements of pistons from Christiaan Huygens (1629–95) who, in turn, was the foremost Dutch spokesman for the mechanistic philosophy of Descartes (1596–1650). Thus, it is not enough to say (as Wrigley implicitly does too) that without coal supplies there would have been no industrial revolution: for without improvements in steam engines the use of coal as a source of mechanized energy would not have been possible either. The active agent of these changes was the increasingly rational mind-set of European scientists and industrialists.

This is the argument that James Lee and Wang Feng's (2001) *One Quarter of Humanity: Malthusian Mythology and Chinese Realities, 1700–2000*, set out to debunk through the accumulation of "new data" and "new methods." They argue that the "binary contrast" Malthus drew between a "Western" demographic model characterized by low fertility and low mortality rates and a Chinese model dominated by high fertility and high mortality rates is not supported by the available evidence on Chinese population behavior. This Malthusian interpretation, the authors contend, held dearly by a long line of historical demographers since Malthus's time, has no basis in "Chinese realities" but is merely another expression of "the ethnocentric and teleologic traps so common to earlier social science" (146).

The idea that a late and non-universal marriage pattern was prevalent across modern northwestern Europe was actually conceived in opposition to a widely held "Malthusian" image of preindustrial populations breeding naturally beyond their resources, only to be cut down by mortality crises. One cannot view the "Cambridge" research on European family systems carried out by John Hajnal (1965, 1982), Peter Laslett (1972), Wrigley and Schofield (1981), and Alan Macfarlane (1978, 1986) as if it were in a direct line of descent from Malthus. In fact, the view which used to prevail before the Cambridge research was accepted, and which traced its ideas to Malthus, and was thus known as "Malthusian" – and included such historical demographers as M. M. Postan and Le Roy Ladurie – held that preindustrial Europe was dominated by a high-pressure demographic system in which positive checks (high mortality rates) played the primary role. This was the "Malthusianism" discredited most fundamentally by the research findings of the Cambridge group. One of the key works of this group was Wrigley and Schofield's masterwork, *The Population History of England, 1541–1871*. Published in 1981, this 779-page book aimed to show that contrary to the generally held view, modern England "did not conform to the high-pressure paradigm" but "experienced a fertility-dominated low-pressure system" (451).

Now, Lee and Feng accept this Cambridge research on the Western family. It is the other side of Malthus, regarding his statements about the non-Western family, that meets their disapproval and that they challenge empirically on the basis of new statistical analyzes. Malthus, they insist, was wrong to classify China as a society dominated by high mortality rates and regular famines (positive checks) rather than by fertility controls or "preventive" checks. While the Chinese pattern was

very different from, and far more complex than, the Western model, it was also characterized by low fertility and moderate mortality. They clearly contrast their position with Malthus as follows:

> Whereas Malthus regarded famines as the major form of positive check in China, we highlight the role of deliberate mortality through sex-selective infanticide and neglect. Whereas Malthus regarded marriage in China as universal and early, we show that although this pattern held for females, marriage was neither early nor universal for males. Whereas Malthus emphasized only one form of deliberate preventive check, delayed marriage and premarital sexual restraint, which he called "moral restraint," we establish that in China sexual restraint within marriage, which we call "marital restraint," was also important (12).

Yet, the truth is that Malthus said little about famines and instead focused on the positive check to population from the "very common" practice of infanticide. One is thus left wondering why Lee and Feng write of their findings on Chinese (female) infanticide as if they were a challenge to Malthus's observations, aware as they are that, for Malthus, infanticide was "typical of many non-Western and non-modern Western societies … particularly China" (42). Is their criticism simply that infanticide "may have been more important in late imperial China" than famines were? But how serious a challenge would this be when the more general and basic proposition of Malthus is that mortality crises, or the positive check, was more important than the preventive check in China? The authors, after all, agree that infanticide, the rates of which could be "as many as half of all newborns" in some areas, is a mortality check.

Perhaps Lee and Feng's real objection is to Malthus's characterization of infanticide as a "vice," "voluntary only to a degree" (42). They would rather describe it as "deliberate mortality," "proactive mortality control": as a "product of rational decision making," based on a clear calculation of the costs and benefits of raising children, "embedded in a peculiar cultural attitude," in which children during the first year were not seen as fully human (47, 61). This would seem to imply that Malthus was wrong in thinking that "rationality" in family planning was a "uniquely modern Western ability" (4). Regardless,, this is too narrow an understanding of what Malthus ([1803] 1960) meant by "the subjection of the passion to the guidance of reason" (487). If he called the preventive check "moral" restraint and argued that this check was "the only virtuous means of avoiding the vice and misery which result from the principle of population" (489), it was because this check

involved more than mere calculation of self-interest. It required "a genuine and constant attachment" between the sexes based on a deep concern for the future welfare and education of children. One hardly need accept Malthus's idea that the principal cause of workers' poverty lay in lack of self-control in the propagation of children to recognize that there is a fundamental moral distinction between rational control of the rate of fertility and rational control of the rate of female infanticide.[20]

It appears that Malthus was also fundamentally correct in his observation that Chinese marriage was universal and early. His only flaw was not calculating that, since infanticide was mainly against females, there was a shortage of women that "prevented many men from ever marrying" (69). Still, as we learn from Lee and Feng, the proportion of married men in China remained more or less the same as in Europe. Moreover, Chinese men did marry much earlier at around age 21, as compared to around age 26 in the West (71).

The one thing Malthus got wrong about China, it seems, was his assumption that early marriage in China resulted in higher marital fertility than in Europe. Lee and Feng collect some revealing data showing that the average Chinese couple in modern China had "at least two to three fewer births than a married couple in the West" (90). This lower birth rate within marriage was achieved by starting childbearing later than in the West, by stopping childbearing "far earlier," and by waiting longer between births (88–90). But did Western couples really have two to three more children than Chinese couples did? Lee and Feng base this claim on three studies: one by Chris Wilson (1984), which showed that the total marital fertility rate (TMFR) for a population sample from seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe, aged twenty to forty-nine, ranged from 6.6 to 10.8 offspring, with a mean of 8.5; another study by Michael Flinn (1981), which showed that the TMFR in England in 1750 was 7.6, in Germany 8.1, in Scandinavia 8.3, and in France 9; and a third study by E. A. Wrigley and others (1997), which showed that the TMFR for English couples between 1600 and 1824, aged twenty to forty-nine, was 7.4 offspring (8, 161).

By contrast, in China, Lee and Feng tell us that, on average, "women married by age 20 rarely had more than 6 children if they remained

[20] Infanticide was forced on poor parents by their inability to feed all their children, particularly when living conditions were deteriorating, and on Chinese women by their inability to practice birth control through late marriage.

married until age 50" (86). Well, there are some serious problems with these numbers. First, since the average age at marriage of European women was far higher than China's, it would have been more realistic for Lee and Feng to offer data for European women married at ages beginning later than twenty. Consider, for example, that in England between 1610 and 1760, women tended to marry at twenty-five to twenty-six years of age (Livi-Bacci 2000: 103), whereas in pre-1950s China, they tended to marry at sixteen to nineteen years (Lee and Feng: 66–67). Thus, we find that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, given an age at marriage of twenty, English women bore on average 7.3 children, but given an age at marriage of twenty-five, they bore 5.3 children (Livi-Bacci 2000: 110–11). The same reductions in TMFR are observable in other European countries once we look at women who married beginning at age twenty-five rather than twenty: in Germany, for example, the average number of offspring drops from 8.7 (at twenty years of age) to 6.4 (at twenty-five years), in Sweden it drops from 7.7 to 5.4, and in France it drops from 8.4 to 6.1. What about the TMFR of the majority of Chinese women who married before age twenty?

Once we take into consideration the non-universal marriage system of Western Europe (less than 90 percent of women married) and the universal marriage pattern of China ("by age 20–24 most Chinese females were already married"), we should not be surprised that, by Lee and Feng's own admission, the total fertility rate (TFR) of Europe, which measures the number of children per both married and unmarried women, was actually lower than China's (65, 84). Unfortunately, we are not told how much lower it was. But one of the studies they use, cited above, makes the point that in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England, the TFR was actually 4.38, a figure substantially lower than the TMFR (7.4) (Wrigley et al. 1997: 355).

Let us examine next Lee and Feng's critique of Malthus's observation that nineteenth-century China was an overpopulated society "in which productive capacity had reached its limits" (40), and in which population increases were controlled largely by mortality crises. First, there is nothing paradigmatic in Lee and Feng's statistical demonstration that despite sustained population growth in China through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, China experienced a sustained decline in mortality rates and a sustained increase in life expectancy beginning in the twentieth century. Malthusians have long recognized that Malthus, to use the words of Le Roy Ladurie, was "born too late." Fruitful as his ideas may have been in explaining preindustrial population patterns,

every demographer recognizes that just as Malthus was making his projections about arithmetic increments of food supplies being outstripped by geometric population growth, Western Europe was beginning to experience a new demographic system lacking any traces of the positive-check cycle. Even Wrigley (1983), one of the sources Lee and Feng cite as having drawn a clear contrast between Europe's and China's fertility regime, wrote that "it was Malthus's fate to frame an analysis of the relationship between population, economy and society during the last generation to which it was applicable" (112). That China, too, witnessed a decline in positive checks in the twentieth century, thanks to the use of modern medicine, scientific agriculture, and contraceptives, does not invalidate Malthus's intuition that preindustrial China may have been overpopulated and "its soil cultivated nearly to the utmost" (1960: 453).

This intuition has been supported and elaborated by Ho Ping-ti (1959, 1975), Perkins, Chao, Elvin (1973, 1984, 1988), Bray, and Huang. Lee and Feng mention but hardly engage with these rival sources (19). The data they collect relate largely to Chinese population processes in the twentieth century. One relevant argument they cite in response to the view that there were fewer and fewer ways during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to increase agricultural productivity within China's shrinking farms is Li Bozhong's (1998) estimation that "annual net production per worker" increased by 52 percent from the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries in the Lower Yangzi (31, 38). But this argument, which they do not elaborate on, is soon qualified by Lee and Feng's own recognition that agricultural growth in this period, including the twentieth century, was "accompanied by a parallel process of labor intensification," by increases in the number of workdays per year and hours per day. They even concede to Huang, in a footnote, that "output per workday[labor productivity] may not have increased" (175), although they add that as a result of "substantial" increases in the number of workdays, "annual output and annual income also increased" (175), But this, of course, is what Huang means by "involutionary growth". Lee and Feng may counter that the dramatic rise in population that China experienced from 160 million in 1700 to 350 million in 1800 to 500 million in 1900 does not sit well with Malthus's observations. Here I would only ask readers to pay close attention to Lee and Feng's own valuable observation that population growth in late imperial China "was tied to a sharp increase in geographic mobility" (118) and that "most population growth during the last two to

three centuries has occurred in China's frontier provinces" (116). Motivated by new economic possibilities in the newly colonized areas, millions upon millions of migrants from the densely populated and ecologically depleted regions of northern China and the Yangzi provinces moved to new settlements in Sichuan, Yunnan, and Guizhou in the west and southwest and Manchuria in the northeast. As a result, from the late eighteenth to early twentieth centuries, while the regional proportion of national population shrank in the Lower Yangzi, from 28 percent to 17 percent, the regional proportions tripled from 6 to 15 percent in the southwest, quadrupled from 3 to 12 percent in the Upper Yangzi [Sichuan], and swelled by almost an order of magnitude, from less than 1 to 9 percent, in the northeast (117).

Overpopulation in North China and the Yangzi delta, long the centers of gravity of the Chinese economy, was no doubt a driving force behind these mass migrations. The idyllic picture Lee and Feng present of nineteenth-century China as a land of low fertility, moderate mortality, and no famines does not hold for these regions. Just look at the Shandong region of North China: during the 268 years of the Qing dynasty (1644–1911), droughts occurred in 233 years, floods in 245, overflows of the Yellow River in 127, and tidal inundations in 45 (Gottschang and Lary 2000: 2). After years of successive drought between 1876 and 1879, the governor of the province of Shanxi, located to the west of Shangdong, reported in 1879 that some 60 to 70 percent of the population was suffering from typhoid fever (Wong 1997). It has been estimated that 9 to 13 million people were victims of famine during this period in the north and northwest (Gernet 1990: 615). Similarly, in the Taihu basin in the Yangzi delta, according to Huang, there was a long-term increase in the incidence and frequency of water logging and drought; thus, whereas in the period between 900 and 1400, water logging occurred once in 3.8 years and drought once in 7.7, in the period between 1400 and 1900, it occurred once in 1.9 years and once in 2.9 years (Gernet: 33–34).

All in all, from the first half of the nineteenth century, after the best lands in north China and the Yangzi delta had been cultivated and the starving poor were forced to cut forests on mountainous lands to grow new crops (which worsened the erosion of the soil and the silting of rivers), floods, droughts, and famines multiplied. By the 1850s, this demographic pressure on land was so serious that even the colonial border regions "were becoming saturated" (Mann and Kuhn 1978). As competition for the choicest lands intensified, conflicts between ethnic

groups became common. The stage was set for the Taiping, Nian, and Muslim rebellions in which tens of millions died.

Conclusion

While one can certainly sympathize with arguments that question the pretences of certain currents of Occidental rationalism that whatever led to the Industrial Revolution was a "good thing" and that European history should be a benchmark by which to evaluate the history of all other societies, I think the counter-evidence presented here is substantial enough to call into question the basic claims of Frank, Wong, and Lee and Feng. Frank's contention that he has refuted the "Eurocentric" consensus ignores so much counter-evidence as to seriously weaken what is an otherwise exciting reexamination of world history. We also found little in Lee and Feng's "new paradigm" about China's demographic system that "overturns" Malthus's past work. Still, Frank's *Re-Orient*, Wong's *China Transformed,* and Lee and Feng's *One Quarter of Humanity* are valuable works in the way they draw attention to new areas of research in world history and the way they redirect us away from a myopic focus on European history. They have positively challenged the notion that Europe's economy was inherently superior *centuries before* industrialization, and have impressed upon readers the fact that China and India were major economic powers in the world market as late as 1750. Certainly after reading *Re-Orient,* Charles Kindleberger's book, *World Economic Primacy: 1500 to 1990* (1996), which purports to be a history of the modern world economy, but does not offer a single word on the Asian economies, except for a chapter on Japan's international role after the 1950s, does seem wanting, to say the least. Similarly, Rondo Cameron's *Concise Economic History of the World: From Paleolithic Times to the Present* (1989) can be charged with a narrowly Western view of the world in dedicating to the non-Western only one chapter out of fifteen. *Re-Orient* decidedly puts to rest the idea that Europe at large was the major commercial power in the globe from the sixteenth century onwards. While I disagree with the claim that colonial profits and resources were decisive in Europe's divergence, I agree (particularly with Findley and O'Rourke) that the transatlantic trade, the transshipment of gold and silver from the Americas, the African slave trade, and the re-export of colonial staples were actual components of Europe's willful rise to economic dominance in the world.

CHAPTER THREE

WHENCE THE INDUSTRIAL DIVERGENCE?

> The genuine refutation must penetrate the opponent's stronghold and meet him on his own ground; no advantage is gained by attacking him somewhere else and defeating him where he is not. Hegel, *Science of Logic*

The Basic Propositions of Pomeranz's "Great Divergence"

Before the Industrial Revolution, during the Enlightenment, European thinkers – Leibniz, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Hume, and Smith – observed, and variously tried to explain, the differences between East and West. In their view, one of the most salient contrasts was Europe's "genius for liberty" and Asia's "despotic" character. Furthermore, in the Near East and also in China, imperial unification was attained early on in their histories, with brief interludes of breakdown and decentralization. While India alternated with longer periods of fragmentation, most of the subcontinent saw imperial dynasties. Only Europe, as Montesquieu argued, was ruled by "many medium-size states" and a type of political structure called "state of estates," which amounted to a partition of powers between kings, lords, towns, and the church, each with a specific set of rights, duties, and legal roles in the affairs of the state (Anderson 1987: 462–72). Enlightenment thinkers discerned certain geographical and ecological factors underlying Asia's unity and Europe's fragmentation. While wide open plains and intensive-irrigation farming predominated in Asia, the European landscape was fractured by the Pyrenees, Alps, and Carpathians Mountains and depended on rainfall for its agricultural output. Moreover, while irrigation in Asia necessitated communal organization and public construction works, which encouraged cultivators to be more servile, in Europe rainfall farming encouraged smaller, independent farming units and less intrusive forms of centralized organization (Wittfogel 1957).[1] In recent

[1] Awareness of the contrast between Europe's liberty and Asia's despotism did not preclude European thinkers from acknowledging, as Smith did, that "China is a

times, these observations have been overshadowed by studies based on the supposition that the most crucial dividing line between Europe and Asia came *after* the Enlightenment. The central question is no longer why Europe enjoyed greater liberties but why Europe/England was the first region in the world to experience self-sustaining industrial growth. Ken Pomeranz's *The Great Divergence: China, Europe and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (2000), winner of the 2000 John K. Fairbank Prize of the *American Historical Association*, co-winner of the 2001 World History Book Prize, and one of *Choice*'s Outstanding Academic Books of 2000, now stands as one of the most influential contributions to this narrower question.

The most detailed work is Pomeranz's *Great Divergence*. In it, he seeks to minimize the *economic* disparities between Western Europe/England and China/Asia around 1800. In scope of reference and degree of quantification, it surpasses previous *comparative* explanations of the rise of the West.[2] Nearly every page is brimming with estimates, percentages, calculations, or tables on numerous aspect of the economic life of Europe and China, including other regions of the world: on life expectancy, caloric intakes, birthrates per marriage, coal-based energy

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much richer country than any part of Europe" (Frank 1998: 13). Frank cites similar passages to support his claim that it was later (in the 19th century) that Europeans (Hegel and Weber) started to view Asia as stagnant economically and "despotic" politically (14). There is no denying Europeans, including Marx, began to emphasize the backwardness of Asia as Europe pushed ahead industrially. The Enlightenment thinkers of the 1700s, however, saw no contradiction in their characterization of some Asian countries as both advanced and despotic. As Perry Anderson observes, the concept "despotism" was widely current by the early 1700s; it was Smith in particular who posited a correlation between hydraulic economies and State regulation and ownership of resources: "In China, and in several other governments of Asia, the executive power charges itself both with the reparation of the high roads, and with the maintenance of the navigable canals…This branch of public police…exceeded very much everything of the same kind which is known in Europe" (Anderson: 467). Revisionists, I would say, want to do away with contrasting notions of "liberty" and "despotism," not because it underplays Asian advancement, but because they don't think much of the liberties of Europeans, especially as they have been heavily influenced by Marxism, a point I will return to in chapter five.

[2] In addition to the endorsing editorial words cited in the back cover ("truly magisterial," "will change the terms of the debate," "never again will Europeans imagine they stood alone in the doorway of economic growth," "the biggest and most important contribution"), this book was the beneficiary of numerous book reviews, including an unusually high number of review-essays and full-length articles by De Long (2000), Perdue (2000), Hall (2001), O'Brien (2001), Vries (2001), Stokes (2001), Pathasarati (2002), Huang (2002), Brenner and Isett (2002), Mielants (2002), Zurndorfer (2003), and Duchesne (2004). It was also the subject of a forum on "Asia and Europe in the World Economy" in the *American Historical Review* (2001), and an extended debate in *The Journal of Asian Studies* (2002) and (2003).

per person, hereditary tenures, labor migration, per capita tea consumption, pounds of cotton output per capita, days required to cultivate one mu, per acre wheat yields, sugar export revenues, and plenty more, including a last serving of six appendixes enough to satiate the appetite of the most ardent quantitative historian. Every chapter contains discussions of a wide body of scholarship in a manner that reveals years of patient study and dedication.

While this book has been the subject of many authoritative counterarguments, including my own detailed review, it has nevertheless become part of the new multicultural orthodoxy in academia. Its claims have been popularized and disseminated in seminars, web-based teaching supplements, expert publications, and undergraduate textbooks. The book has been widely flagged as part of a "new paradigm"[3] on the "universal" history of humanity for "our" global age.[4] What follows is mostly an effort on my part to assemble in a systematic way the recent findings of economic historians to determine whether they confirm or refute the claims made by Pomeranz. This will involve a re-examination of the sources which underlie Pomeranz's own

[3] Patrick Manning gleefully writes of a "new paradigm" in world history in reference to Frank's *Re-Orient*, Wong's *China Transformed*, and Pomeranz's *Divergence*; see his "Introduction" to the forum on "Asia and Europe in the World Economy" in volume 107 of the *American Historical Review* (2001). The "Bridging World History Series," a widely used web-based source for the teaching of world history across the United States, embraces Pomeranz's thesis and the "world systems critique" of modernization as a mandatory component of a student's education in the "rethinking of the rise of the West."

[4] Patrick Obrien, once a member of the "Eurocentric consensus," has joined the multicultural (world-systems) opposition to Western uniqueness. In a "Proposal to the European Research Council" (2009) he writes of the need for "an international alliance…to respond to demands from a cosmopolitan generation of students now at university for greater engagement with big questions that are… clearly relevant to the geopolitical and moral concerns of their (and our) times of accelerated globalization." He mentions the names of Montesquieu, Voltaire, Hume, Quesnay, Turgot, Miller, Hegel, and other Enlightenment thinkers known for their "universal" approaches, but they are just as immediately dismissed for their "*superficiality,*" including Spencer, Spengler, Toynbee and (the early) McNeill. O'Brien refers to the stimulating discussions engendered by "neo-Weberian explanations for the convergence and rise of the west" (by Jones, Rosenberg, North, Mokyr, Landes and Maddison). But, again, he quickly brushes them off to embrace "Wallerstein and his followers in the World Systems School of Historical Sociology." He writes that the "divergence of European economies from Asia is explicable…in terms of the gains the former made from the discovery and exploitation of the Americas and (as Marx asserted) by way of the systematic use of naval power and colonization in Asia." He tells potential financial supporters that Pomeranz, Wong, Marks, Goldstone, Harriet Zurndorfer, and Pathasarati ("aided by that indefatigable polemicist Gunder Frank") have in effect refuted the old Eurocentric view on Western uniqueness. This Proposal can be found in the web site

arguments, including additional secondary sources, as well as reviews, commentaries, and newly researched findings published in response to, or following the publication of *The Great Divergence*.

The first criticism I will make is that despite the vast numbers and sources used in the *Great Divergence*, it contains major documentary gaps. It has nothing to do with the obvious inability of a single volume to cover everything, or with the biased use of evidence to support the author's view. Rather, it has everything to do with the unbalanced way in which most of the evidence and the sources are assembled to support issues and arguments that are not central to this debate and, indeed, to the book's own thesis. This book, in my view, ceases to be a meticulous assessor of the available sources precisely on the most significant questions and themes it raises. Statistics, the saying goes, can deceive. In this instance, it is as if the mass of evidence collected served to cover up insufficiency. Understanding this insufficiency requires a clear appreciation of the structure of the book's arguments, which consist essentially of five related propositions. These propositions, as was made clear in the last chapter, are not altogether original to Pomeranz, yet he deserves much credit for framing them in rigorous, quantitative terms. These propositions, then, are the following:

1. As late as 1750–1800, the life expectancy of China's richest region, the Yangzi Delta, was roughly equal to English levels, or greater than most of Europe (41).
2. Chinese markets for land and labor (and possibly capital) were as open, if not more so, than European ones. China had freer labor, substantial mobility and migration, and enforceable property rights. And, whereas most of the land in all parts of China was largely alienable, "much of western Europe's farmland was far harder to buy or sell" (73).
3. While Europe had more livestock per person, China enjoyed higher yields both per acre and per seed, thereby remaining ahead

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of the Global Economic History Network, at London School of Economics: (http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/economicHistory/Research/URKEW/Proposal,April2009). O'Brien articulated these ideas in his inaugural essay for the *Journal of Global History*, "Historiographical traditions and modern imperatives for the restoration of global history" (2006a), emphasizing the marginalized narratives of the non-Western world; their struggle against "the interests of the wealthy, the powerful and the West", and the need for a new global history that is "inclusive" of the diversity of the world, in resistance to the master narratives of the West.

in land-saving technologies well into the 19th century. There was no agricultural revolution in England prior to 1850: "British yields per acre did not rise much between 1750 and 1850" (55–6). In mining and metallurgy, Europe was forging ahead, but China still enjoyed higher productivity yields in textiles (138–9).

4. No "part of the world was necessarily headed for an industrial breakthrough" in the 18th century (206). Neither Europe nor China saw sustained increases in per capita output or in labor productivity prior to the 19th century. Both regions were still organically based preindustrial economies on a similar path of diminishing returns and rising prices.
5. The availability of cheap supplies of coal as well as land-saving resources in the New World allowed England to industrialize first and thereby avoid the labor-intensive pattern of development which a non-imperial China was compelled to follow.

I will argue that only the third and fourth claims, if proven accurate, would constitute a serious challenge to the traditional Eurocentric emphasis on culture and institutions. The first proposition, if true, is certainly a blow to the old Malthusian vision of 18th century China as a backward society in which both fertility and mortality rates were high and in which per capita consumption was declining. But comparisons of life expectancies and living standards on their own tell us little about technological trends or about the overall economic direction of different societies. Ronald Lee (1980), for example, has observed that the real wage in England was approximately the same in 1800 as it had been in 1300, and yet there were substantial differences in technologies and levels of (potential and actual) development between these periods. It is well known that Stone Age societies were able to ensure relatively "affluent" standards by practicing population controls and by following an egalitarian ethic, and that hunter-gatherers were better off on average than agrarian peasants: not only was their workload less intensive and of shorter duration, but their diets were more nutritious (Cohen 2000). The same can be said of proposition two. Important as this claim is in challenging the neoclassical idea that Western Europe advanced more because it had the least regulated markets in the world, it only shows, if valid, that China and Europe had comparable degrees of commercialization and mercantile skills; it does not tell us much about future economic growth and rates of innovation.

The same, however, cannot be said of propositions three and four. Proposition five simply does not follow, or loses its gravity, if the book does not disprove the conventional view that Europe was already following a different path of economic growth in the 18th century. A crucially important pillar of the book's thesis is to demonstrate that Europe/England did not enjoy any significant technological lead over China before 1800, particularly in energy-based technologies. Another pillar involves demonstrating that Europe was facing serious resource constraints by 1800 and that its agriculture did not experience any substantial changes in productivity before 1850. Yet, contrary to what a first reading might suppose, the third proposition and also certain features of proposition four are barely treated with the same rigor and exhaustiveness as the first two. Not only are the findings of some sources seriously misinterpreted, but many other well-known sources are willfully ignored by Pomeranz. Roughly two-thirds of the book, and most of the data and sources, go to support claims one and two. The other third of the book is taken up by propositions four and five, with relatively few pages devoted to proposition three. While proposition four is analyzed in a full chapter with abundant details and laborious analyses, some key aspects of this claim, as I will show shortly, are insufficiently developed, perhaps inconsistent, and at times unfaithful to the intended meaning of the sources.

By conducting a close textual analysis of propositions three and four, I hope to demonstrate, on the basis of a close consultation of the secondary literature, that these claims lack substantive empirical support. Europe was not facing in the 1700s any major ecological limits to growth or a situation in which diminishing resources were forcing peasants to work harder because returns on each workday were declining. On the contrary, during the period 1700–1850, most of Western Europe, beginning with England, was on a trajectory away from the Malthusian limitations of the old regime as a result of sustained improvements in both land and labor productivity. Despite a growing population, the standard of living among English workers shows steady signs of improvement after the 1830s. The ecological benefits (or the so-called "ghost acreage") provided to England by American imports were not significant on their own. The actual and potential expansion of the intra-European trade was far more important. While coal was a critical source of mechanized energy, there were other, less coal-oriented, routes to industrial development such as France's heavy reliance on scientifically improved hydraulic sources of energy. China, on

the other hand, was unable to achieve any industrial breakthrough despite enjoying a much greater "ecological windfall" than Europe from the acquisition of new territories in central and southwestern Asia after 1500.

Malthus was Born too Late in a World too New

When arguing in proposition four that Europe and China were organic economies facing "serious" ecological limits by 1800, Pomeranz compares "selected key areas of China and Europe" (12) and thus makes the reasonable point that if we are to declare that population pressure on the land was a serious problem for China in 1800, then we ought also to make the same claim for Europe insofar as the area known as "England" was as worse off ecologically as the Lower Yangzi region and insofar as other regions in China and Europe were similarly capable of further population growth.

But this solution is riddled with its own problems, not least of which is that Pomeranz is not always consistent in his comparative analyses. For example, sometimes he suggests that Europe as a whole was encountering similar ecological difficulties as China, or East Asia as a whole (241) while at other times he specifies that, while Europe had more room for growth than China, both Western Europe (or Northern or Northwest Europe) and the Yangzi Delta and Pearl River Delta had similar constraints (212, 236). On still other occasions, he says there were more slack resources in Western Europe than in the core regions of China (215–16) but that England really had "very little" room left to grow "even in 1750" (216).

The truth is Pomeranz very much wants (and needs) to make the claim that Europe, or at least Western Europe, not just Britain, was on a similar path of diminishing agricultural returns and rising resource costs as was China. A looming crisis in Britain alone would have strained even more the question he is later compelled to address for Western Europe as a whole: why were the Americas such an essential trading partner when the Eastern and Baltic regions of Europe (for Britain, it would be the whole of continental Europe) were capable of exporting large quantities of grain, timber, and other land-saving products? Moreover, the evidence is clear that in China, not just one province but a few sizable areas such as the Lower Yangzi and North China, were facing even more serious ecological/demographic pressures than

Britain. Finally, if Western Europe had no resource constraints and no need for the land-saving resources of America, Pomeranz would have to explain how a country such as France, for example, devoid of good coking coal, managed to industrialize in the early 19th century. Pomeranz needs to demonstrate that Western Europe as a whole could not increase its economic output without "a new kind of trading partner" in the New World (263).

Pomeranz thus starts chapter 5, "Shared Constraints: Ecological Strain in Western Europe and East Asia," with the sweeping remark that "both in western Europe and east Asia, there was relatively little room left by the late eighteenth century for further extensive [non-industrial] growth" (212). But as he knows the evidence on Western Europe as a whole will not grant him this favor, he immediately backs away from this assertion. Already in the first part of the book, where he argues that French agriculture was further away than China from the neoclassical ideal of open markets, he cites approvingly James Goldsmith's (1984) conclusion that "there can be little doubt that the fragmentation of the land and the antique provisions of seigneurial law slowed down the reorganization of the countryside, but they were not insurmountable obstacles....*The evidence suggests an underutilization of resources, not a Malthusian impasse*" (79–80, emphasis added). He is even more direct in chapter 5 where he states that "western European agriculture remained underutilized, even in 1800" (215). Here he is citing George Grantham's (1989a) work about how greater access to markets encouraged peasants in France "to change their crop mixes, use previously underutilized household labor, and shift their own consumption patterns in ways that allowed them to sell far more grain by 1850 than in 1750, even without much technical change" (215). Pomeranz, nonetheless, thinks that whatever advantages Western Europe may have enjoyed from slack resources, "these were largely offset by east Asian advantages in the efficient use of land and fuel" (211).

Could not Western Europe use its underutilized resources "by increasing the labor intensity of its land use"? No, because Pomeranz wants us to believe that "the nature of European farming made it unlikely that it would ever fully exploit these possibilities" (212). What about the just cited passage from Grantham regarding French peasants who were able to market "far more grain" in 1850 than in 1750 by using "previously underutilized household labor"? Or the similar observation Pomeranz otherwise makes about Germany that "after 1800, when

the end of Old Regime restrictions on land use led to an *enormous reduction in fallowing*, there was a marked switch to *new crops* and much more market-oriented agriculture" (216, emphasis added)? At this point, Pomeranz's answer is that these "labor intensive" changes "could not be quickly and easily mobilized *to meet the new population and other pressures of the nineteenth century*" (216, emphasis added). Are we expected to believe French and German farming practices remained unchanged after 1800? On this most pressing issue, Pomeranz seems satisfied with Grantham's (1989b) argument elsewhere that French agriculture, due to certain institutional rigidities, "remained undercapitalized even in the 1860s" and Thomas Nipperdey's (1996) finding that in Germany, "despite a gain of close to 80 percent in cultivated acreage in the fifty years after Napoleon began tearing down the old Regime, output just barely kept pace with soaring population" (217). Leaving England and Denmark aside for the moment, this is all Pomeranz has to say about the "serious" ecological troubles facing Western Europe by 1800 (apart from a few additional remarks about timber "shortages" and rising fuel prices in eighteenth-century France).

I believe that by the mid-1700s most of Western Europe had started to move away from a Malthusian world in which a limit was set to demographic growth by the inability of agricultural output to expand and keep up with demand. Few scholars today accept the extreme view of Michel Morineau (1970, 1977), namely that French agricultural output saw no significant increases from the medieval period until the end of the eighteenth century. Although growth tended to be erratic, with regular setbacks, some regions did achieve considerable increases in productivity in the 16th and 17th centuries. Using a statistic – total factor productivity (TFP) – that measures the ratio of the value of all inputs (land, labor, taxes, seed) to the value of all outputs (grain, sheep, and cattle), Philip Hoffman (1996) estimated that the growth in TFP in the Paris Basin was as high as 0.3 to 0.4 percent per year in the 16th century, with "equally rapid change" in Bretteville in Normandy. During the 17th century in the southeast of France, the increases in TFP were higher at 0.5 to 0.7 percent per year (132–33). For France as a whole, Dewald and Viardi (1998: 26) found that between the later 16th and the later 18th centuries, wheat yields increased by about 30 percent and oat yields by 40 percent.

Admittedly, before the 1750s, the French economy was still susceptible to nationwide subsistence crises. Warfare, weather-related food

shortages, and problems with distribution were easily transformed into major mortality crises, including those of 1628–32, the "Fronde" crisis of 1649–54, and the famines of 1693–94 and 1709–10 (Anderson 1996: 243; Livi-Bacci 2000: 53; Post 1984). But as productivity levels began to surge in the 1720s, these crises became progressively more subdued until they were eliminated a century later. The statistical evidence on national agricultural trends assembled by J.C. Toutain – where the total agricultural product increased by 60 percent in real terms between 1701–10 and 1781–90 as compared to a 28 percent rise in population (Heywood 1992: 37) – is perhaps too optimistic. It is worth noting, however, that a strong Malthusian such as Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, on whom Pomeranz relies to support his pessimistic views, thinks that during the 18th century, the population of France "for the first time" broke "the old ceiling of 17–20 million inhabitants that had rarely been attained between 1320 and 1720" (1975: 13; 1982: 174). He finds Toutain's figures flattering "for French pride" and says that a more realistic, though still tentative, estimate would be an increase in the total agricultural product (in constant prices) in the range of 30 to 40 percent between 1710 and 1789 (1975: 16–17; 1982: 175–76). Yet, as he writes elsewhere, this increase in output was "not simply of a normal, ordinary advance, a recovery, but of a new age of growth to the measure of the incoming century" (1974: 160). While he carefully points out there was no escape yet to a world completely free from Malthusian checks (such as periodic increases in the death rate among the very poor), he emphasizes that "survival pure and simple [was] better assured than in the preceding century" even though there were seven more million mouths to be fed in the 1780s (1975: 19). Famines "disappeared during the period 1740–89" (1982: 176), and "the rise of the gross farm product matched and sometimes perhaps outdistanced the rise in rural population" (1974: 161).[5]

[5] One has to wonder how Pomeranz, so careful in his quantitative analyses, could have attributed to Le Roy Ladurie, on the basis of one of the articles I cited above (1974), the idea that "France remained 'stuck' for over two centuries [17th and 18th] at an apparent population ceiling, suffering recurrent subsistence crises" (Pomeranz 2000: 76). If I may cite the conclusion of Le Roy Ladurie's 1974 article: "The Malthusian curse … was slowly lifted in the eighteenth century, even before it had been formulated in 1798 by the man whose name it bears. Malthus was a clear-headed theoretician of traditional societies. But he was a prophet of the past; and he was born too late in a world too new" (162). In his "A Reply to Robert Brenner," Le Roy Ladurie (1988) specifies the date at which France began "to escape the inflexibility of the great neo-Malthusian type of agrarian cycle" as "after about 1720" (104–5).

Massimo Livi-Bacci (1992) supports this view and further observes that the occurrences of severe mortality crises in France "decline dramatically between the first and second halves of the eighteenth century" (60). Although French infant mortality remained high until the 1780s or 1790s, with rates of about 280 per thousand births, by the 1820s, it had declined substantially to around 180, and by the 1840s to 155. Similarly the expectation of life at birth saw a dramatic increase from twenty-nine to forty-one years between the 1780s and the 1840s (Anderson 1996: 246, 272; Vallin 1991: 43, 47).

The 18th century looks even brighter once we narrow our focus to the more prosperous regions of France such as the Paris Basin and the part of Normandy near Bretteville. Comparing the Basin's food supply with the city's population, Hoffman (1996) estimates that while the food supply in the late eighteenth century forged ahead "at a rate of 0.46 to 0.53 percent per year, the city's population advance[d] at only 0.39 percent per year" (137).

Even during the tumultuous years of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, Donald Sutherland (2002) observes that in some regions of France there were "impressive" increases in the total factor productivity of agriculture. Around LeMans, he estimates a growth in TFP of about 45 percent between 1780–84 and 1816–20. In Rouen, in the same period, he calculates a rise in TFP of around 30 percent (16–17). The estimates of Grantham (1993: 486), which cover many regions in north France, including poorer regions, indicate that this expansion continued unabated throughout the entire period between 1750 and 1870. For example, in Paris, he estimates that output rose from 13 hectoliters per hectare in 1750 to 15 in 1800, to 16.7 in 1840, and to 19.0 in 1862. In the West, he estimates that it rose from 8 hectoliters in 1750 to 9.7 in 1820, to 12.4 in 1840, and to 15.9 in 1862. And in Brittany, it rose from 12 in 1750, to 14.1 in 1820, to 14.4 in 1840, and to 15.6 in 1862. Grantham also observes that man days per hectoliter of wheat in north France declined, on average, from 5.17 in 1750, to 4.54 in 1800, and to 2.79 in 1869 (483).

One should keep in mind that the mechanization of farming and the use of synthetic fertilizers began to spread in France only after 1840. It was the very possibility of farming land that was once pasture, swamp, or moorland, together with the reduction of fallow and the introduction of new crop mixes, that allowed these increases in output from 1750 to 1840. Just in the last thirty years of the old regime, the amount of cultivated land was extended from 19 to 24 million hectares

(Livi-Bacci 1992: 62). Equally important was the greater use of fodder crops, which permitted a 50 percent increase in livestock between 1815 and 1835 (Magraw 1987: 110). This could hardly have been a society in which all the organic resources had been used up or in which the remaining internal resources could not be mobilized.

In the case of 19th Germany, agricultural output may not have exceeded the striking growth of population from 17 million to 35.4 million between 1750 and 1850 (Livi Bacci 2000: 8), but it certainly managed to sustain it. One thing we know is that Germany, like France, had plenty of room for growth during this period. It is difficult to make sense of Pomeranz's claim that European land-use patterns (commonage, pastures reserved for animals) "made it unlikely that it would ever fully exploit" its underutilized resources (212, 239). Between 1816 and 1852, the area under cultivation in Prussia was extended by more than a third by the cultivation of former waste, reduction of fallow, and at the expense of meadow and pasture. The use of new root crops also increased significantly from only 3 percent of Prussian crops in 1800 to 24 percent by 1840, together with improvements in the quality of cattle, horses, and sheep (Borchardt 1973: 99; Henderson 1975: 24). After the Stein-Hardengberg Reforms were enacted between 1807 and 1821, in the wake of Napoleon's defeat of Prussia in 1806, a whole new system of capitalist agrarian relations was established.

The result, according to Richard Tilly, was a "substantial" increase in agricultural productivity. Imperfect as these estimates may be, it is worth noting that Tilly (1996: 100), by drawing on different sources, came up with the following annual rates of growth in net output per worker (in 1913 prices): 1816–22 = 1.61, 1822–31 = 2.59, 1831–40 = 1.46, 1840–49 = 1.09. He also came up with the following annual rates of gross output per worker per hectare: 1800–1840 = 1.29, 1840–60 = 2.13. Pomeranz tries to persuade us that this expansion came at the expense of labor intensification without any definite increases in per capita incomes. He elaborates this point in an earlier section of his book where he states "[i]n Europe, too, there is abundant evidence that the expansion of output that occurred between 1500 and 1800 resulted largely from the application of much larger amounts of labor rather than any breakthrough in productivity; the trend was so general, basic, and long-lived that Jan DeVries has proposed a new conception of the period as one of 'industrious revolution'" (91–92).

Indeed, in his zeal to prove the claim that prior to 1850 the European population managed to increase output only by "increasing overall

pressure on available resources" (93) and working harder, without necessarily improving per capita incomes, Pomeranz wrongly equates Jan de Vries's idea of an "industrious revolution" with Huang's argument that the expansion of production and exchange in Qing China's economy was "involuted" because it rested "on the ever-greater application of unpaid family labor, which earned small (and shrinking) amounts per unit of labor" (91). He is mixing up two distinct concepts.

When DeVries (1994) argues for an "industrious revolution" in modern England, he means that families were willing to work harder and enjoy less leisure to increase their supply of, and demand for, new consumer goods, which is a far different claim from what Huang (1990) says about Chinese peasants having to work harder because the amount of goods obtained per unit of labor was declining. This is also how I read Grantham's (1989a) observation that French "farmers responded to the market after 1750 by working harder, investing more, and by shifting the balance of their crop mix toward more marketable productions" (44). Harder work brought higher returns.[6]

Pomeranz does cite some interesting data showing that while total hours of labor rose between 1500 and 1800, there were small gains, if any, in the European standard of living (92–94). But I do not see why we should infer from this that Europeans were facing limits on productivity and mounting pressures on resource supplies. This simple neo-Malthusian model is even less illuminating in the context of 19th Western Europe. To take Pomeranz's example, a major reason why real wages in Germany saw "no signs of improvement before 1850" (94) was that income and consumption for the vast majority of people, in this age of weak trade unions, were squeezed in favor of capitalist accumulation. Given the striking gains in productivity during this period, it is difficult to accept the notion that population growth was somehow outstripping the economy's ability to sustain it. While real wages probably rose "by as much as one-third of one percentage point" from the 1840s to the 1870s, the "real net product per head probably grew by at least 1 percent per year."

This pressure on wages, Tilly (1996) adds, was accompanied by an increase in the share of income going to capital investments, as "reflected in data on the personal income as collected and estimated

[6] Huang also draws attention to other flaws in Pomeranz's use of the term "involution" in his review-essay (2002).

for Prussia in the 19th century [which show] a marked increase [in the] share of high incomes – precisely those incomes whose size was significantly influenced by income from capital" (111). This redistribution of income had a direct effect on investment and the growth rate. Although this is not the place for a precise assessment of the sources of German investment (Borchard writes that until 1875, most of the railway building, particularly in Prussia, was in the hands of private companies (1973: 143) considerable surpluses must have been invested to achieve rates of growth in the 1850s of 10 percent in railways, 30 percent in iron, and 9 percent in coal (Tilly 1996: 106).

End of the Old Malthusian Regime in England

When he deals with England, Pomeranz holds nothing back. He asserts that England had fewer underutilized resources or "very little slack left to exploit even in 1750" (216). In the 18th century, this region of Europe was "perpetually short of wood." Already between 1500 and 1630, he observes, the price of wood had risen 700 percent, three times as fast as the average price increases between 1540 and 1630 (220). The iron industry was in a state of decline. In the short period between 1763 and 1795, the price of bar iron doubled, "and imports from Sweden and Russia soared despite tariff protection and the beginning of substantial growth in coal-based production" (220–21). Timber and fir imports rose by 700 percent between 1752 and 1792. Indeed, as if to imprint the gravity of this organic fuel shortage, Pomeranz notes that the "British economy was already using over 8,000,000 Kcal of coal-based energy per person in 1815, before most of the boom in steam engines" (222).

But the most distressing sector was Britain's organic agriculture, which seemed to have reached an ultimate constraint by 1750: "English agriculture had reached a point by the late 18th century at which further increases in output were almost impossible without a major technological breakthrough" (126). Per-acre and total yields from arable land remained stagnant between 1750 and 1850 (216). The much-talked-about Northfolk rotation "had not solved problems of soil degradation" (223) and, while greater use of animals and manure had "increased total farm output (grain plus animal products), it had not improved crop output (224). This inability of the agrarian sector to keep up with demographic pressures forced up the price of wheat, a trend that reached a critical point between 1760 and 1790 when the

price of wheat relative to other products rose 40 percent while real wages remained stagnant or declined. As such, England had no choice but to import its food, first from Ireland, but as this economy collapsed in the 1840s, "it came to depend heavily on the New World and to a lesser extent on Russia and Oceania" (217–18). This state of affairs, Pomeranz concludes, "strengthens our sense that without the dual boons of coal and colonies, Britain would have faced an ecological impasse with no apparent internal solution" (218).

This, basically, is what Pomeranz says to support the claim that England, by 1750, was encountering severe ecological limitations. For the specific remark that productivity had not changed much between 1750 and 1850, he relies on just one source: Gregory Clark's (1991) article "Yields per Acre in English Agriculture, 1250–1860." For the claim that grain yields "from arable land remained flat and the threat of decline constant" (216), until Britain began using synthetic fertilizers after 1850, he relies on one book, Mauro Ambrosoli's (1997) *The Wild and the Sown*. Considering this small number of sources, one would have expected greater sensitivity to their arguments, but that is not the case. Of the general remarks Ambrosoli makes about English agricultural production, none reject the idea of an "agricultural revolution" in the period between 1750 and 1850. While Ambrosoli examines certain findings and sources that "seem to undermine" (366) the notion of an agricultural revolution, he also considers other sources that speak of increases in grain yields. He actually writes that the "first Agricultural Revolution, which ended around 1850, was to be followed by a second one based on technical discoveries" (394).

Clark's (1991a) estimates, too, are not as pessimistic as Pomeranz makes them: "wheat yields in England seem to have increased steadily from 1600 to 1800, after remaining at nearly medieval levels until 1600" (458). He specifies that, in the period from 1600 to 1700, yields "rose substantially" from 13.5 bushels per acre "to about 19 bushels per acre," and rose again "in the 18th century by a slightly greater absolute amount" (455). He adds, it is true, that "from 1770 [not from 1750] to 1860 the rise in yields may have been no more than 3.5 bushels per acre" (455), which is to say that yields in this period did not increase by as much as the previous two centuries. While the gain in yields in the 18th century was about 30 percent, the gain from 1800 to 1860 was only 15 percent.

This single paper by Clark may be taken as an indication that by 1770, England was facing a situation in which additional increases in

output per acre were progressively harder to secure. But the evidence one finds in most of the literature does not at all support this conclusion. Clark himself published another study in the same year (1991b) in which he concluded that from 1300 to 1850 the overall output per acre increased 3.2 times, with a combined six-fold expansion in the pastoral sector. While the timing of the agricultural revolution still remains a highly contested issue, and while estimates do vary depending on the survey or method of calculation used, the general message of the sources is clear: over the entire period 1300/1550–1750/1900, from 1300 when the balance between output and population was very precarious and a sequence of poor harvests easily translated into widespread famine, English agriculture experienced substantial, although irregular and punctuated, improvements in its productive capacity. In addition to the estimates I offered in the previous chapter, let me point out the following estimations, starting with a recent paper by Liam Brunt (2001) that focuses on the 18th century: he calculates that English output per acre increased by 70 percent between 1705 and 1775 and that, thereafter, "the value of output per acre continued to rise strongly in England," so that by 1845 it was 58 percent higher. Robert Allen sees "unprecedented" changes in output and productivity as early as the 1520s, but thinks the pace of expansion slowed considerably in the second half of the 18th century. He believes Overton's own studies (some of which we cited in the last chapter) support this view, since they show that bushels per acre in Norfolk and Suffolk increased by 68 percent between 1584–99 and 1710–39, whereas they rose "only a further 17 percent from then until the rest of the 18th century" (Allen 1999: 223). Similarly, in Lincolnshire, wheat yields increased by 76 percent between 1550–76 and 1725–49, but over the remaining decades of the 18th century, they increased "only 20 percent". My view is that these numbers merely show a slower pace of expansion in the second half of the 18th century, a pace that, according to Allen himself, "accelerated notably" after 1800.

Elsewhere, in fact, Allen (1994: 112) reviews other estimates that show fewer improvements in output per acre in the period 1700–1750 than in 1750–1800. Thus, rye, wheat, barley, and oat yields increased, respectively, by 1, 2, 2, and 4 bushels per acre from 1700 to 1750, whereas they increased by 8, 2.5, 5, and 7 bushels per acre from 1750 to 1800. At any rate, these estimates indicate that over the entire period between 1700 and 1850, wheat and oat yields per acre, for example, rose by as much as 78.1 and 66.7 percent, respectively. B. A. Holderness

estimates (1988: 138–40) a gain of 56 percent in wheat yields per acre between 1750 and 1850. More recently, Wrigley (2006), after carefully collating the research findings of the last two decades, has calculated that net cereal output rose more than 180 percent from 1300 to 1800.

There is also debate over the extent to which, and also why, *labor productivity* improved between 1700 and 1850. Brunt (2001) says that between 1705 and 1775, labor output almost doubled, but that thereafter it was "fairly static." This slowdown may have been due to the fact that some of the sources pushing output per acre up tended to be labor-using rather than labor-saving. By the 16th century, the amount of new land available in England was relatively small, therefore, expanding output required many labor intensive activities, such as drainage of marsh and fen, reclamation of pastures and heathlands, extensive use of lime and marl, and replacement of bare fallow with new root crops, all of which included stone clearing, wall building, deep ploughing, and much hoeing and lifting. Overton (1998: 90–91, 100–101, 110) has observed, veritably, that the high point of these labor-intensive activities was in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, and that the main period of the diffusion of turnips and clover, including the reclamation of upland wastes, came after 1750.

It would be foolhardy and tendentious, however, to assume the increases in land productivity came at the expense of a general decline in labor productivity. The empirical data belie this picture. The absolute number of workers employed in agriculture did continue to rise until the 1850s and, perhaps for some time after 1750, the length of the working day, or the length of the labor year, also increased due to the higher labor requirements of the new husbandry. But most estimates do show steady increases in output per worker from 1700 to 1850, resulting in a marked relative decline of the agricultural workforce over the first half of the 19th century (Berg 1985: 45). Elsewhere, Wrigley estimates that over the period 1600–1800, output per worker rose by between 60 and 100 percent and that it continued to rise about 1 percent per year in the period 1811–51 (Hudson 1996: 67). Clark (1993: 246) too acknowledges that if one excludes southern England and looks at the data for the northern parts, the productivity gains in agriculture were "much greater," as the level of productivity in 1701–30 was 64 percent that of 1846–50. This overall increase in productivity was evidently an important reason why the proportion of the population working in agriculture was able to decline from roughly

80 percent of the population in 1500 to just 20 percent by 1850 (Overton 1998: 8).

Overall, the evidence suggests that while some of the factors that increased land productivity require additional inputs of labor, there were other factors that offset this trend and release labor from agriculture. Among these factors, I would emphasize the greater use of draught animals and the gradual replacement, since the Middle Ages, of oxen by horses, which "could work 1.5 times faster than oxen and, in theory, could replace labor requirements by a third."[7] Overton (1998: 125–26) estimates a 34 percent rise in the number of horses per worker between 1700 and 1800 and a 21 percent rise between 1800 and 1850. Let us not forget measurements of *livestock productivity*, of the volume of output of animal products, which show a dramatic increase of 250 percent between 1700 and 1850 (Overton 1998: 115).[8] Wrigley (2006: 451) quotes estimates of milk production per cow per annum rising from 100 lbs to 450 lbs (from 1300 to 1850); output of meat per cow rising from 168 lbs to 600 lbs, and for sheep rising from 22lbs to 70 lbs. Another improvement was the consolidation of scattered strips into larger farms, from the mid-seventeenth century onward, accompanied by the replacement of common workers by farm specialists.

Pomeranz's argument that demographic expansion in England was accompanied by rising food prices due to the inability of the agrarian sector to sustain an output high enough to keep up with demand is forcefully questioned by Overton (1998). He argues, on the contrary, that the unprecedented increases in agricultural productivity that England experienced during the 1700s led to a new historical situation in which the old Malthusian "link between population growth and the growth in food prices was irrevocably broken" (8). This positive relationship between rising population and rising food prices continued until the 1780s. "But after the 25-year period starting in 1781 the relationship changes: population growth rates rise to unprecedented levels (over 1 percent per annum), but the rate of growth in prices starts to fall, from a peak of over 2 percent per annum" (69). Pomeranz's figures

[7] According to Paul Bairoch (1973: 465), the horse's speed of traction was on average 50 percent faster than that of oxen.

[8] Holderness (1988: 32) says that between 1770 and 1860, the number of sheep rose by 40 percent, the number of cows by 11 percent, and the number of swine by 35 percent. More recently, Wrigley estimates that, from 1300 to 1800, the number of horses increased (in millions) from 0.51 to 1.21 while the number of cattle rose from 1.49 to 3.50 (2006: 448).

on wheat prices are thus misleading. Overton notes that the price index of wheat began to rise in the 1760s, as population kept growing, "reaching a high of 296 in 1809, [but] from this peak [wheat] prices start to fall, despite the continued rise in population" (65).[9]

Thanks to the valuable research of Schofield, Wrigley, and Livi-Bacci, it is well known that in the period between 1700 and 1800–1850, England witnessed a complete end to the old demographic system in which population growth would eventually exceed the ability of the economy to supply food until higher mortality rates and lower birth rates would intervene to control the number of people. Livi-Bacci (2000) observes that as early as the mid-17th century, population growth and rising prices in England "had only a moderate effect on the mortality curve" (53). Elsewhere, he documents that in a group of 404 parishes, the frequency of months affected by high mortality rates was 1.3 percent in the first half of the 18th century, 0.9 in the second half, and 0.6 in the first quarter of the 19th century (1992: 59–60). He further notes an increase in life expectancy from 36.9 years in 1750–59 to 37.3 in 1800–1809 to 40.0 in 1850–59 (97).[10] Indeed, the very period that saw the fastest increases in England's population, from 4.9 million in 1700, to 5.8 in 1750, to 8.6 in 1800, to 16.6 in 1850, also saw a considerable rise in per capita income by 20 percent between 1785 and 1820 (Livi-Bacci 2000: 8–9, 128). The old conflict between population growth and living standards had finally been broken.

This is the conclusion Wrigley and Schofield (1981) reached in their extensive study *The Population History of England, 1541–1871*:

> The possibility that the period before 1800 can be subdivided should not be allowed to obscure its general uniformity of experience, nor the decisive nature of the break occurring during the industrial revolution, a change so decisive that it must reflect a dramatic rise in the rate of growth of the economy as a whole. … Perhaps for the first time in the history of any country other than a land of recent settlement *rapid population growth took place concurrently with rising living standards*. A basic feature of the human condition had changed … England crossed a threshold into a new era. (412, emphasis added)

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[9] In analyzing these price increases, one should keep in mind that the years from 1793 to 1814, fourteen of twenty-two grain harvests in England were bad harvests due to frost, cold, and rain (Zuckerman 1999: 62).

[10] For a similar assessment, see Richard Price (1999), who writes that "by 1690 Britain had moved well beyond the 'pre-industrial' demographic trap that linked mortality to food prices" (31). See also Hudson (1996: 148–49).

Standard-of-Living Debate

Pomeranz could still counter that "all available estimates show that British foodstuff supplies per capita stagnated or declined in the 19th century" (218) and that the grain-buying power of ordinary people in England did not improve until "well into the 19th century" (92). But this is another hasty conclusion he makes without a balanced weighing of the evidence. There is some evidence that food consumption per person did not rise sharply during the first half of the 19th century and that some aspects of living standards such as urban living conditions (due to crowded and unsanitary houses) and factory working conditions (due to harder and faster work) deteriorated during the Industrial Revolution. But there is also considerable evidence suggesting that while the average real wages of adult male workers remained more or less constant between 1790 and 1820 they rose steadily, if slowly, afterwards. The more optimistic version has come from Lindert and Williamson (1983) who estimated that "real wages nearly doubled between 1820 and 1850" (1983), though later they offered other findings which reduced this improvement to 62 percent (1985). Although these estimates were praised for their realistic use of a cost of living index based on actual worker's budget shares and corresponding prices, they were viewed as incomplete in their reliance on adult male wage indices only. The optimistic estimations, it was argued, ignored the real income of paid female workers and traditional artisans "who ended up on the losing side" (Mokyr 1993: 128; Hudson 1996: 31). Later on, Charles Feinstein (1998), using an index of average annual earnings covering "all manual workers, male and female," reasserted the "pessimistic" viewpoint with his calculation of a "very moderate rate of improvement" of less than 30 percent from 1778–82 to 1853–57.

But the debate continued, and it is worth noticing that none of the estimations, "optimistic" or "pessimistic," have supported the revisionist vision of Britain as an overpopulated society in which returns per unit of labor and land were diminishing or static. Gregory Clark (2001a) thus discovered "a modest but sustained upward trend" in the real wages of male farm laborers after the 1820s – a social group that, I might add, represented the bottom 40 percent in the overall distribution of earnings in this period – "so that by the 1850s real wages of male agricultural workers [were] nearly 50 percent higher than in the 1770s" (497). Later Clark (2005) produced a series of statistics on the real wages per hour "for building craftsmen and laborers in England

annually" which, in his view, clearly backed the optimistic side. He even went so far as to say that the "break from the Malthusian era… began circa 1640, long before the famous Industrial Revolution" (1308). He estimated "significant productivity growth" between the 1630s and 1740s, including an increase of 67% in wages by the 1740s as compared to the pre-1600s levels. He noted, however, a 10 percent declined in real wages between 1770 and 1810, which happened to be the time around which Malthus was formulating his ideas. This may explain, Clark writes, why Malthus thought that the innovations which were already visible in his time (the spinning jenny and water frame in 1769 and the mule in 1776) would be expended in population growth and not in raising wages. David Ricardo was also facing a world of slow or flat wage increases when he assimilated the subsistence wage doctrine in his *Principles of Political Economy* published in 1817. But between the 1820s and the 1860s, real wages grew at an average of 0.9 percent per year. Marx, Clark adds, had fewer reasons to advance his thesis on the absolute deterioration of working class income in 1867, when the first volume of *Capital* was published (1318–9).[11]

In the meantime, however, Allen (2001) may be seen as a defender of the pessimistic side, in stating that "it was only between 1870 and 1913 that the standard of living in the industrialized parts of the continent rose noticeably above early modern levels" (413). Yet, when one looks carefully at the particulars of his argument, the overall view that comes across is that while real wages "did not rise greatly from 1500 to 1850 they did not fall either, despite a sevenfold rise in population" (433). Allen actually says that his estimations shift "the ground from under both 'optimists' and 'pessimists,'" adding that "after 1815" the benefits of the revolution "were finally trickling down to the working class", with a "sharp rise" coming after 1870 (433). Allen makes a similar argument (2007) in response to Clark's 2005 paper cited above. He even agrees with Clark, although his estimates show a lower growth in wages between the 1770s and the 1850s, that "the real wage in the early nineteenth century was not a 'subsistence wage'" (13).

[11] See Paul Johnson's readable case studies of famous intellectuals, including of Marx's use of "out-of-date materials because up-to-date material" did not support his view that living standards were falling (1988: 67–69). Johnson, however, may be unfair to Marx as a private person and a family man; for a recent essay that brings out the sincere, affectionate atmosphere of Marx's relations with his daughters and wife, see Hollander (2010).

The unequal distribution of the benefits of economic development has to be tailored into these numbers. It is thus worth noting that Pomeranz (136–37), in his effort to convince us that income was less evenly distributed in Europe than in Asia, refers to some interesting data collected by Lindert and Williamson (1982), which suggest that the percentage of the national income going to the top 2 percent of the population in England rose from 19 percent in 1688 to 23 percent in 1801–3. In a later work titled *Did British Capitalism Breed Inequality?*, Williamson (1985) pursued this matter in greater detail, arriving at the conclusion that, from 1688 to 1801–3, the richest 35 percent increased their share of the national income at the expense of the bottom and the middle income groups. This trend continued between 1801–3 and 1867, "but with a different twist: the top 5 and 10 percent gained enormously, the unskilled bottom 40 percent gained slightly, while those in between got squeezed" (67).

In answering the question of what drove this inequality, Williamson (1985) followed the models of Ricardo and Marx, concluding that the central issue was "rates of pay by class, rather than the numbers in any given class" (78). "Labor 'surplus' and the demographic transition never seem to have played an important role" (201). In a later publication, Williamson (1990) drew attention to what he called Victorian England's "public sector failure" and the startling reality that such utilities as sewage, water supply, fire protection, and housing were seriously undersupplied during the first stages of industrialization in favor of private investment and upper-class consumption. A less regressive tax/public system would have certainly spread the benefits of economic growth more widely. Similarly, one should consider that, after the Poor Law Reform Act of 1834, spending on poor relief fell from more than 2 percent of national income to about 1 percent, a decline that, according to Mokyr (1993), "would have, by itself, reduced the incomes of the very poor by something between 7 and 10 percent" (130–3). Working-class incomes, moreover, would have been better were it not for the unrestricted employment practiced in England before the Factory Acts, the weak trade unions, as well as the subjection of workers to commercial and not just harvest fluctuations.

I would not want, however, to neglect the obvious ways in which the unusually high rates of population growth after 1750 aggravated living conditions by creating a large reservoir of cheap labor and by raising the demand and price of staple foods. The dynamics of population were clearly part of the process by which real wages lagged behind

productivity and by which the gap between the bottom and elite segments of the population widened (Van Zanden 1995). Let us be clear, however, that we are speaking of a higher proportion of wealth being squeezed by an entrepreneurial class which, in England, was the main agent promoting innovative ventures. This is suggested by trends in the investment ratio, which rose from 9.08 to 13.68 percent of national income between 1760 and 1860, or by trends in the rate of capital accumulation, which rose from 0.8 percent per year in 1760–80 to 2 percent per year in 1831–60 (Williamson 1985: 95). It is also suggested by the increasing concentration of land over the 17th and 18th centuries. Whereas in the early 17th century, peasant farms had occupied nearly one-third of the cultivated area, by 1800, they occupied only 8 percent of all farmland. Whereas capitalist farms of one hundred acres or more represented only 14 percent of all farms in the 1600s, by 1800, they represented 52 percent and occupied two-thirds of the cultivated area (O'Brien 1996: 237).[12]

[12] I have serious doubts regarding the stark contrast Brenner and Isett draw, in their long paper on Pomeranz's book (2002), between the predominance of small-scale and family-oriented agricultural production in China, and the predominance of capitalist, large-scale farms in England, all run with wage labor, at the end of the 18th century. In my view the difference between Chinese and English agrarian relations was not really between small-scale peasant farming and large-scale capitalist farming. Brenner and Isett assume that small-scale farming per se, even when it operates within the context of a commercialized economy, cannot result in capitalist development on the grounds that small farms are incapable of enjoying economies of scale, or undertaking risky investments in technological improvements. This is a view first presented by Brenner in 1976 but widely accepted by Marxist-oriented critics of the revisionists such as Huang (1990: 1–8) and Vries (2003). Vries writes that "if Britain's agriculture had been dominated by small family farms like agriculture in Qing China, it would in all probability have seen involution as well" (52). But there is a strong line of research on agrarian change in preindustrial western Europe indicating that the rise of large farms and contractual labor relations came not from powerful landlords evicting peasants from the communal lands (enclosure by force), but from middle-scale peasants who lived in less-communal field systems and enjoyed stronger property rights, including easier access to markets. As it was, through the medieval era there were regions in England where a free holding peasantry prevailed, in the Eastern counties of Kent, Essex, Suffolk, and Norfolk, and the South Western counties of Devon, Cornwall, and Somerset. These fields were already "enclosed;" peasants could farm them as they chose, and they were eligible for protection under the royal courts (Allen 1992; Hopcroft 1994; Hoyle 1990). Some of these were participants in an active land market, consolidating fields through the 14th and 15th centuries. They were quite innovative in the use of forage crops and complex rotations. This process weakened the customary relations and collective practices of agriculture. It has been estimated that 45 percent of the arable land in England was already enclosed in 1500 and that the extent of the land held in "common" was only one-third (Clark and Clark 2001). Although some

Finally, in direct response to Pomeranz's (and Partharathi's) claim that the standard of living in England was no better than that of the Yangzi delta region (and of southern India), Stephen Broadberry and Bishnupriya Gupta (2006) have produced some of the first detailed comparative estimations: i) Indian silver wages were – even at their highest points – about 40% of the British level in the first half of the eighteenth century; ii) while the Indian grain wage remained comparable to the English level until the end of the 17th century, there was a "sharp divergence" during the 18th century (17–8); iii) the silver wage was much lower in China by the Late Ming period, and the grain wage fell "decisively behind" by the Mid-Qing period (20). Allen et al (2007) have arrived at similar observations: "the standard of living of workers in London was always much higher than that of workers in Beijing or the lower Yangzi" (28). The standard of living of the unskilled workers in major cities in China and Japan was roughly similar to their counterparts in the less developed (central and southern) regions of Europe for most of the eighteenth century (31).

New World Resources versus European Resources

What about Pomeranz's fundamental claim that Western Europe "was able to escape" a path of diminishing returns thanks "in large part" to "the exploitation of the New World [which] made it unnecessary to mobilize the huge numbers of additional workers who would have been needed to use Europe's own land in much more intensive and ecologically sustainable ways" (264)? We cannot say. Pomeranz does not provide a single sentence explaining how "land-saving imports" from the Americas helped to abolish Western Europe's constraints. His calculations are for Britain alone. This brings me to another difficulty I have with Pomeranz's method of comparing selected key areas of China and Europe. In this case, it is the unspoken assumption that

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landlords did carry out enclosures in the South Midlands between 1450 and 1525, by evicting their tenants and converting the open fields to pasture, it has been estimated that there was no wave of enclosure and dispossession in the 16th century, as only an additional 2 percent of the land was enclosed. It was the 17th century that saw the fastest rate, and it was led by yeomen, when an additional 24 percent of the land was enclosed (Wordie 1983; Overton 1998). These yeoman farms should not be equated with the "swarming mass of small peasant" holders Weber saw in China after the massive population growth of the 18th century (1981: 352).

the British-American trade relation can be seen as a test case for the relationship between Western Europe and the Americas. He sets up his argument about Britain's importation of land-intensive goods as if it were a general confirmation of Western Europe's need for land-intensive goods (257). The only qualifier is that Britain "especially" benefited from this colonial trade (296). Otherwise, throughout the book, we are made to believe that serious ecological scarcities were affecting both Britain and Western Europe, which they were able to overcome by securing food and raw materials from the New World (263).

Still, even in the case of Britain, I do not think Pomeranz offers a convincing argument that imports obtained from the New World were essential to overcome Britain's apparent shortage of land. He believes the most important land-saving products Britain imported from the Americas were sugar, cotton, and timber. He calculates the total "ghost acreage" obtained by importing these goods, for 1830, to be "somewhere" between 25 to 30 million, a figure exceeding Britain's total crop and pasture land combined (276). A dramatic figure indeed, but the real issue is whether Britain, assuming it had any land constraints, would have needed its own land to grow these products if it had not obtained them from the Americas. Let us note in passing that in the case of sugar, we are dealing with a sweetener that Britons could have done without. Pomeranz also forgets that Europe's dependency on cane sugar was eventually eased or broken by the familiar process of import substitution. Already toward the end of the 18th century, chemists and agronomists in Germany, Hungary, and France had discovered a practical way of extracting sugar from beets and of breeding the cultivated fodder beets for sugar content (Galloway 2000: 445). While in 1810, the amount of European beet sugar produced was still tiny compared to cane sugar output, by 1840, its total output as a percentage of the world sugar output had increased to 8 percent and by 1900 to the very high figure of 64 percent. Meanwhile, the proportion of cane sugar produced in the Caribbean witnessed a general decline through the 19th century, from 81 percent in 1800 to 48 percent in 1840, to 21 percent in 1910 (Goodman and Honeyman 1988: 42). Exactly how much of this beet sugar was consumed by the British population is difficult to say. But the evidence we do have is sufficient to raise a warning flag against Pomeranz's seemingly exaggerated estimate that the caloric intake of sugar in the average British diet had increased from roughly 4 percent in 1800 to more than 18 to 22 percent in 1901 (274–75).

For it so happens that during this very period, there were fundamental changes in the region of provenance of sugar imports: while 76 percent of sugar imports to the United Kingdom in 1831 came from the British West Indies, by 1850, that figure had dropped to 37 percent, and by 1900, to a mere 4 percent. Meanwhile, the percentage coming from Europe had risen from 1 percent in 1850 to 13 percent in 1875, to 80 percent in 1900 (Woodruff 1973: 664, 718–9).

On the surface, the case for the importance of North American timber exports to Britain carries a bit more weight than for cane sugar. I say "on the surface" because this claim hinges on the assumption that England and Western Europe "needed" a trading partner like the New World to obtain the required supplies of timber. Pomeranz knows that Eastern Europe, including the Baltic, Scandinavia, and Russia, was "ecologically capable of exporting vast quantities of grain, wood and other land-intensive products" (261), but still insists that the ability of these regions to increase their exports was limited by the fact that the majority of their peasants were not free and were not in the market for Western imports. Their economies, in other words, were still "subsistence-oriented," and this "limited Western Europe's ability to pay for its primary goods" (257). While in most of Scandinavia, farmers were free, there were "not enough of them to buy very much" (258). Strange as it may seem, the slaves of the New World solved this underconsumption problem and overcame the specter of Malthus in Europe. Not only were slaves cheaper and their products less expensive, but they did not produce their own food and clothing and were thus a "significant market for imports," particularly cheap cotton, which represented most of what Britain sold to the West Indies (265–6).

This rather odd argument is one that Pomeranz has to make if he is to convince anyone that the supposed ecological pressures that Western Europe faced by 1800 were, apart from the fortunate location of coal in England, unsolvable within Europe. But Pomeranz's case for the importance of timber soon encounters difficulties; as he acknowledges, British imports of North American timber "were trivial before 1800" (275). While he soon adds that, by 1825, imports of wood from this area were equivalent to 1 million acres of European forest, we are still left wondering how the British economy was able to achieve in the eighteenth century the productivity indexes we saw above with such "trivial" imports of wood energy. Pomeranz could, of course, respond that the subsequent rises in timber imports were a critical factor easing land constraints in the nineteenth century. This is a reasonable conjecture

but only if we accept the unreasonable claim that Eastern Europe, Russia, and Scandinavia were inherently limited in the amount of wood and other land-intensive goods they could export to England. Pomeranz himself writes elsewhere (as we saw earlier in his attempt to explain the seriousness of Britain's energy shortages) that "over half the total shipping tonnage entering British ports in the 1750s [from Sweden and Russia] was timber, and fir imports grew a further 700 percent from 1752 to 1792" (221). In writing this, he was apparently unaware of what he was about to say some pages down about the "crucial built-in limits" in the East-West trade, as he willingly writes that exports from Sweden and Russia to England "soared despite tariff protection."

All Western European countries were actual and potential customers for Baltic primary exports. Pomeranz's suggestion that this trade may have peaked or leveled off after 1650 applies only to the volume of grain shipped to Dutch ports (Kirby 1990: 229). Once Russia defeated Sweden in the Great Northern War of 1700–1721 and finally gained access to the Baltic Sea, Russia's foreign trade saw a "spectacular" twelvefold increase in real terms between 1742 and 1797 (Kahan 1985: 163). England was Russia's most valuable trading partner and market. While Russia had a limited market for imports, England did not mind the fact of a negative trade balance, for it understood that Russia offered vital products or "strategic materials" such as hemp, pitch, tar, and masts that could ease deficiencies in original resource endowments. British North America (Canada) emerged as a major competitor against Russia and other Baltic states only when Napoleon closed the ports of his empire to British shipping. Otherwise, the nascent Canadian timber industry was excluded from the British market by both its high costs and its high shipping charges as compared to the nearby Baltic countries, which also provided the required types of timber, pine, and oak and had a competitive advantage in lower wages and better skilled labor. The rough-hewn Canadian lumber was less valued than the finished timber of the Baltic in the construction sector and shipbuilding industry in Britain (Lower 1973: 3–26). But the threat posed by the Napoleonic wars, including the introduction by Napoleon of his "Continental System" of 1806 intended to block British trade in continental Europe, prompted the British government to subsidize the timber trade of British North America. A discriminatory tariff was thus raised against Baltic timber from 11 shillings per load to 22 shillings in the years 1802–5 and then raised to 65 shillings in the last years of the war. Though this tariff was reduced slightly to 55 shillings in 1821,

it remained high enough to ensure to Canadian producers the biggest share of the market (Lower 1973: 28–48; Wynn 1981).

The Baltic States were willing and able to supply Western Europe and Britain with primary resources. The Nordic countries were as eager as Russia to export their vast supplies of timber. Bo Gustafsson (1996: 212) observes that when the timber trade was still restricted to North America, Sweden's wood exports more than doubled between 1832–5 and 1846–50 (see also Jorberg 1973: 438). Once it was clear to Britain that its national objectives would be best served by a freely operating market, it began to reduce the tariff on Baltic timber in the 1840s, and by 1849, terminated the Navigation Acts. Sweden responded in the first half of the 1850s by increasing exports of timber by 50 to 60 percent, with greater increases after the 1860s (Jorberg 1973: 439). In the end, despite major innovations in the techniques of ocean transport, the shift to free trade led to a steady decline in the proportion of timber imported by Britain from North America (including the United States): from 63 percent in 1850 to 31 percent in 1875, to 28 in 1900, whereas Europe's share rose from 36 percent in 1850 to 69 in 1875, to 72 in 1900 (Woodruff 1973: 718–9).

Again, on first reading, one is likely to be swayed by Pomeranz's estimate that "raising enough sheep to replace the yarn made with Britain's New World cotton imports would have required staggering quantities of land: almost 9 million acres in 1815 … and over 23 million acres in 1830" (276), until one researches the following points. First, although bringing up sheep for wool requires large tracts of land, in cotton-growing regions such as the United States, "cotton is not a land-intensive product" (Vries 2001). Why not ask instead: what if England had been as ecologically fortunate as many regions of China were to grow their own enormous quantities of raw cotton?[13] In any case, even if Britain had been forced to pay higher prices for raw cotton elsewhere (which may not have been required since demand for cotton fibers was moderate compared to the world's supply), it would have likely dominated the world market given the remarkable innovations and organizational changes of Britain's textile industry during these years (Vries 2001). The real dynamic of this exchange consisted less in cheap

[13] Some regions of China gained an even bigger "ecological windfall" from the importation of raw cotton: "Between 1785 and 1833, the single province of Kwantung imported on average from India each year six times as much raw cotton as all Britain used annually at the same time of Arkwrights's first water frame" (Elvin 1973: 312–3).

slave labor than in the ability of the textile sector to decrease its costs through innovations at the same time as increasing the volume of its output.

The domestic market of the New World for British exports was important but not as large as Pomeranz claims; in 1820, Europe still remained the major importer of British cotton, and the Americas as a whole never absorbed more than 30 to 35 percent of British cotton exports between 1820 and 1896 (Farnie 1979: 91). Not only was the population of the West Indies small, but many slaves in the South of the United States were also producing their own food and clothes (Vries 2001). The expansion in the demand for colonial staples in Europe and for European manufactures in the Americas was largely a function of falling transportation costs brought on by changes in ship design as well as improvements in the handling, sorting, and warehousing of goods (Shepherd and Walton 1972). In other words, it was the internal dynamism of the British economy that made the acquisition and use of colonial resources possible and profitable in the first instance.

Consider, finally, that the staple trade with British North America was not always based on the exploitation of cheap slave labor but was a voluntary exchange undertaken because both parties correctly believed it made them better off. Even in the case of commodities produced by slave labor, there were many instances in which the terms of trade were favorable to the Americas. John McCusker and Russell Menard (1991) observe that "the final thirty years of the colonial era [of the future United States] were marked by a major improvement in the terms of trade as prices for American staples rose more rapidly than those for British manufactures" (68). Douglass (1966: 54–4) has also estimated that, in general, the years 1793–1808 were marked by "unparalleled prosperity" in the United States, not only because of the increased productivity of shipping and the rise in freight rates, but also the large increases in imports for consumption at favorable prices. In the expansive years of 1815–18 and 1832–39, when a rapid rise in the price of American exports occurred, the terms of trade were also "extremely favorable" (70, 91). Vries (2001) also reminds us that West Indian sugar in Britain cost more than world sugar due to preferential duties and that the only West Indian export sold below world prices between 1768 and 1782 was ginger.

These findings are very difficult to square with a theory that purports to show that profits from "unequal exchange" were essential to

the accumulation of capital in Europe.[14] Once we add the costs of defense and administration to these preferential rates of duty, it becomes clear that this mercantilist trade was not a cost-less endeavor as the world-system school would have us believe.[15] Western Europeans were willing to finance a costly transatlantic expansion under the mercantilist belief that military power and security could be obtained only within a self-contained economic empire.

Was Cheap Coal Sufficient or Necessary?

What about coal? Are we not dealing with a resource the absence of which would have made it increasingly difficult for Britain to circumvent the eventual limitations of an economy running mainly on organic sources of energy? Was not the use of coal a striking feature of the English economy by the end of the eighteenth century, when coal output exceeded 10 million tons a year? Had Britain been in the same situation as China, without cheap and convenient access to this mineral, how many additional acres of forest would it have required to match the annual energy output of China's coal industry? Pomeranz's number is in the millions. The wood-based energy situation in England was undoubtedly serious. Beginning in the last two-thirds of the 17th century, there were clear signs that the British iron industry was being slowly deprived of energy by a growing shortage of wood. Growing amounts of bar iron had to be imported from Sweden. Britons had to learn how to obtain coke from coal before their iron industry could grow at a steady rate again. Without Abraham Darby's idea of using coke to produce cast iron in 1709 and Henry Cort's conversion of pig iron to wrought iron in 1784, the future of the iron industry would

[14] It should be noted that in his evaluation of the contribution of the colonial trade to the industrialization of England, Pomeranz shifts his attention away from profits to resources, except for a few paragraphs where he tries to show that a small increase in gross investment, from profits earned in the colonial trade, could have a major effect on net investment. But as Vries (2001) points out, this argument can be easily questioned by showing that earnings in many other domestic industries could also have a major effect on net investment.

[15] See Mokyr (1993: 70) for additional sources showing a worsening in Britain's terms of trade in the 1780s and 1790s and after 1800. This does not mean, of course, that Britain's economy was suffering from a surplus drain as a result of this "unequal exchange." This deterioration in the terms of trade reflected, rather, gains in productivity that allowed British industrialists to expand output and capture larger markets while keeping low prices.

have been most uncertain.[16] The increased use of coal, however, created its own problems, as it resulted in the progressive deepening of the pits and thus an increase in the amount of power required to pump the water out of the mines. It was this difficulty that led to the invention of Newcomen's engine in 1712. But this "atmospheric" engine was really a pumping engine that was too inefficient and too costly in fuel to be useful to drive machinery. Subsequent improvements in its design and construction were hardly enough to bring about the "coal breakthrough." It was not until 1765 that steam power could be turned into an industrial revolution, when James Watt invented the separate condenser.

Now Pomeranz's argument is that the conditions that led to the transformation of Newcomen's engine into the more efficient and adaptable steam engines created by Watt were essentially accidental. Britain could focus on building steam engines because nature had given her enough supplies of coal to make its exploitation financially feasible. We should not take it for granted, he insists, that the economic potential of steam power was obvious at the time. The early Watt engines were quite expensive to repair and could not compete with the less expensive water-power technologies. As late as 1800, 50 percent of all steam engines were used only for pumping water in mining, and most of those used in textiles were secondary to water power. The slight technological edge Britain enjoyed in instrument-making technologies mattered only in the context of easy access to abundant coal supplies and overseas resources. He writes,

> Take away some of the incremental advantage conferred by skill transfers from nearby artisans in other fields, the learning by doing made possible by the application to nearby coal fields, and the low cost of coal itself, and – as incredible as it seems to us today – the steam engine could have seemed not worth promoting. (68)

Pomeranz is correct: steam power, as many scholars have long observed, "was integrated in British industry through a prolonged

[16] I would be hesitant to accept Pomeranz's suggestion (222) that increasing numbers of British ships had to be built in British North America because domestic wood supplies were insufficient. Oliver Rackham (1976) observes that foreign oak was not widely used "until about 1803 and the Navy continued to rely on British oak until 1860" (100). One should not forget that trees regenerate and that from the late seventeenth century onward, Britain saw "extensive replanting schemes" (Overton 1998: 90). Half a million hectares were planted in Scotland alone between 1750 and 1850.

and lengthy accretion rather than a sudden transformation" (Price 1999: 30).[17] In 1800, the steam engine was still used primarily in mining; only 21 percent of the engines were used in textiles, and most of these were used as accessory devices for pumping water for water wheels (Goodman and Honeyman 1988: 192). Water power continued to be a cheaper source of energy than steam power as late as the 1840s and 1850s. The famous cotton mills that led the change from cottage to factory were powered by water wheels. Of the 15 million acres of arable land in England, only about 200,000 acres were cultivated by the steam plough in the 1860s (Price 1999: 30). It was only after 1870 that steam power accounted for 50 percent of British industrial motive power. To the degree that this is accurate, however, Pomeranz needs to explain how an economy in which the substitution of mineral for organic and water power was so slow in pace and limited in extent before the 1850s but was still able to increase its industrial output, according to Crafts's (1989: 66) conservative calculations, at a rate of 2.11 percent per annum between 1780 and 1801 and at a rate of 3.0 percent between 1801 and 1831. Put another way, if Britain's traditional economy had little room for expansion, how do we account for the fact that up until about 1860, 50 percent of all productivity growth came from the non-mechanized sectors of the economy (Price 1999: 28)?

These facts suggest, indeed, that cheap coal was not the only factor allowing Britain to make a major breakthrough in its economic path.

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[17] I will not subject to criticism Pomeranz's neoclassical assumption that if people have enough supplies of cheap coal, they will invent, as needed, the appropriate technology to convert mineral heat into mechanical motion. As other reviewers have already noted, coal is "just a fossil fuel lying under the ground" (Vries 2001). Let me add that Wrigley (2006) has recently re-emphasized the point I made in the previous chapter (challenging Wong's misreading of Wrigley) that England was not saved at the last moment by the fortunate-passive presence of coal. He notes that between the 1560s and 1800 (while her economy was still organic) the output of coal per head of population increased 24-fold from 0.062 tons to 1.504 tons (462). The British were dynamically engaged in finding ways to use coal effectively before the invention of steam engines. The English economy was changing during the lifetimes of the classical economists, "becoming less and less organically based [and]…for more than two centuries in England, coal had been replacing wood as the prime source of [heat]" (477). The mechanical knowledge nurtured by Newtonian science was not only a necessary condition for the utilization of coal as mechanical energy but was also the *conscious human element* which made its use possible in the first place. Although Pomeranz acknowledges the growth of a scientific culture in Britain "in the 150 years before 750" (44), he quickly minimizes the importance of this peculiar culture with the cavalier remark that "science and mathematics" (Newtonian?) were also flourishing in 17th century China (61–62).

There were other, less coal-oriented routes to industrial development. If Britain had not been as lucky in its mineral endowments, it would have relied more heavily on water power. This is exactly what France did. Lacking coal that could easily be converted into coke and facing a geographic situation in which the cost of transport could double or triple the cost of coal (Fohlen 1973: 52),[18] France came to depend on water power "to a much greater extent than did her coal-rich neighbours" (Crouzet 1996: 41). Although Englishmen such as John Smeaton (1724–92) made numerous improvements to waterwheels (Stowers 1958), the French assumed a leading role in the transformation of this source of energy from a traditional craft into a scientific technology. In 1802, they introduced a new breast-wheel with buckets; in 1823–25, they invented an undershot waterwheel with curved vanes; and in the 1830s, they invented and patented the hydraulic turbine, a highly efficient device that could convert the force of falling water into mechanical energy, followed by Joval's axial flow reaction turbine in 1841 and Girard's impulse design in 1850, upon which other scientists improved later. The horsepower provided by hydraulic installations around 1845 was three times the power of steam engines (Fohlen 1973: 48; Cameron 1991: 197–98). Yet despite the relative absence of steam power before 1850,[19] the French economy performed quite well, with industrial rates of growth of 2.5 percent per year between 1815 and 1850 and labor productivity increases in industry of 1.5 percent from 1825–34 to 1855–64 (Crouzet 1996: 51, 60; Fohlen 1973: 70). It achieved these rates, I might add, together with sustained increases in per capita gross domestic product, despite having lost its North American colonies and despite a sharp drop in French sugar production in the Caribbean from 125,000 metric tons in 1787 to just 36,000 metric tons by 1815 (Maddison 2001: 58).

The French case makes it abundantly clear that substitutes to coal could be found that could serve as supplementary sources of energy for industry. After all, a coal-poor country such as Holland was able to achieve exceptional success during the 17th century in many industries by relying almost entirely on peat as a source of heat energy for

[18] In the 1840s, transport costs were still high enough that coal worth 15 francs per ton at Saint-Eteinne, for example, would cost 40 to 45 francs when it reached Paris (Heywood 1992: 16).

[19] Consider the following stark contrast: in 1840, the total steam power in France amounted to 34,000 horse power, whereas in England, it amounted to 350,000 (Goodman and Honeyman 1988: 195).

brewing, brick and tile manufacturing, salt refining, distilling, bleaching, dyeing, and printing textiles (Wrigley 1993). This is not to underestimate the revolutionary significance of Britain's coal-related technologies. It was the British, as Landes (1993) emphasizes, who "inaugurated a new, more productive, mode of production" with their invention of steam engines. These engines made possible the conversion of thermal energy (heat) into kinetic energy (motion). The result was a totally new form of power with "wider ramifications within the larger economy" and greater cumulative potential than, say, French improvements in the manufacture of silk and of alkalis. The French understood this, which is why they began to import a growing share of their coal consumption and, shortly after Watt invented his engine, obtained a concession from Watt to make engines in France, soon making models that required less fuel than those made in Britain. Trade and technological creativity, to borrow Joel Mokyr's (1993) words, can always "liberate nations from the arbitrary tyranny of resource location" (32). Just consider how Switzerland, with no coal, no iron, no colonies, and no direct access to the sea, obtained vast amounts of raw materials by meeting the "much-dreaded" English competition on the world market with her highly efficient textile and watch- and clock-making export industries (Fritzsche 1996).[20]

Another interesting case is Denmark, the more so because this is the only area of Europe for which Pomeranz manages to find a source (Kjaergaard 1994) that actually argues that, during the period between 1500 and 1800, the economy was able to grow only by increasing the number of work days annually because the returns from every extra unit of labor were gradually declining. Kjaergaard observes that

[20] In yet another twist to his comparative method, while Pomeranz at times likes to downplay England's economic leadership by examining it within the context of European "backwardness," at other times he separates England from the rest of Europe and writes of her importation of food from Ireland (217–8), for example, and of timber and iron from Sweden and Russia (220–1), as if this were an indication of England's inability to satisfy her own needs. As we will see soon, at no time does he separate the more advanced Yangzi Delta region from the rest of China in this way to consider how much this one region may have benefited from the importation of goods from the rest of China and from China's own colonial acquisitions. The claim that the achievements of the English agricultural revolution should not be exaggerated, considering that, in the late 1830s, for example, Irish food imports were equivalent to "at least 13 percent of the entire output of English agriculture" (Thomas 1985, 742) makes sense only if one is willing to see every trade relation as an "ecological windfall." It is worth remembering, at any rate, that by 1850, when one-fifth of British food was imported, the agrarian sector was facing a population three times larger than it was in 1750.

Denmark, particularly by the first half of the 18th century, was confronting urgent ecological problems "in the form of forest devastation, sand drift, floods, reduced fertilizing power, and cattle plague" (18) and that peasants were forced to work harder only to maintain their standard of living (Pomeranz 2000: 212, 239–40). I question, however, Pomeranz's conclusion that Denmark was stuck in a labor-intensive pattern of development late into the 19th century and that "no foundation for a major [industrial] breakthrough was laid" over the second half of the 18th century (212). This is not Kjaergaard's conclusion. His thesis is very clear: in the critical years between 1750 and 1800, Denmark averted "an entropic nightmare" by means of a "green revolution" in agriculture, by utilizing new sources of energy and raw materials and by importing increasing quantities of coal from England, all of which she financed mainly by exporting agricultural products. "In the 1820s," he writes, "the gloomy prophesies abounding in books and periodicals vanished like the morning dew" (128). Denmark was ready to follow the industrial path of her more advanced European neighbors. It has been estimated that between 1780–89 and 1840–49, life expectancy at birth increased from 35 to 44 years (Livi-Bacci 1992: 60), and that the gross domestic product per capita (1990 currency values) rose from 1,034 in 1700 to 1,274 in 1820 to 2,003 in 1870 – the best record among Nordic countries (Maddison 2001; Jorberg 1973: 386).

Dynamic Rather than Static Comparisons

The comparisons revisionists make tend to be based on the selection of examples from various static points in time without a proper appreciation of trends over extended periods of time. The result is that revisionists tend to miss the very question this debate is about: the *rising (or declining)* trajectories of China and Europe. Thus, much is made of the large size of some of China's cities during the Sung dynasty, namely that Hangzhou numbered over a million people in the 12th century, whereas Paris and London numbered just a few tens of thousands each. This is an important contrast; one could add that Hangzhou numbered hundreds of tea-houses, restaurants, theaters, hotels, whereas taverns were the norm in Europe until late in the 1700s. The diet of the wealthy classes in medieval Europe (1200s) still consisted largely of slabs of meat heavily spiced to hide signs of rot. But when we compare urbanization trends dynamically one finds the following contrasting trend: in

Europe, in 1000 AD, the proportion of the population living in towns with more than 10 000 inhabitants was next to zero (there were only 4 towns with more than 10,000 inhabitants), whereas in China it was 3 percent. However, by 1800, the West European urban ratio had increased to 10.6 percent, whereas the Chinese ratio, despite massive population increases, was only slightly higher at 3.8 percent. In Britain it was over twenty percent (Maddison 2001: 221).

It is indubitably the case that Chinese naval technology was superior to that of Europe through the 15th century. A static comparison of Cheng-ho's and Columbus' ships shows the former to have been much bigger in capacity. The seven voyages Cheng-ho undertook between 1405 and 1433 each carried personnel numbered from 20,000 to 32,000. The last of the seven expeditions, in 1433–35, included 317 ships, of which 62 were of the "Treasure Ship" class, which were as large as 400-plus feet in length with an average cargo capacity of 2,500 tons (Mote 1999: 613–617). Chen-ho's flagship is estimated to have been 120–5 meters long, about 50 meters wide, and 12 meters deep, with four decks and watertight bulkheads. In comparison to the three ships Columbus used on his first trip, the largest ship, the Santa Maria, was 34 meters long, 7.9 meters wide, and 4 meters deep, with a cargo capacity of only 280 tons. But this dramatic contrast makes it all the more pertinent why Cheng-ho's ventures were terminated by the mid-1400s. Why were the official records of the expeditions destroyed? Why were most of the shipyards closed, with the result that, by the 1470s, the fleet of large warships had been reduced from 400 to 140? (Maddison 2007: 160–5). Contrariwise, why did the total number of ships sailing from Europe to Asia increase steadily from 770 in the period 1500–99, to 3,161 in 1600–1700, and to 6,661 in 1701–1800? Why did Western Europe's merchant fleet increase seventeen-fold over the period from 1470 to 1820 (Maddison: 112, 82)? Why were there successive improvements in the design of ships, sails and rigging, cartography and geography, in gunnery, meteorological and astronomical knowledge from the 1400s onwards? I will address these questions in the next chapter.

Similar contrasting trends have been observed in the macro-economic indexical trajectories of Western Europe and Asia. In addition to the many I have already presented, we learn from Maddison (2006: 70–1) that the levels of per capita GDP (1990 international dollars) increased for Western Europe from $427 (1000 AD) to $771 (1500) to $1,202 (1820), whereas for Asia they increased just barely

from $465 to $568 to $581, during this long period. The per capita GDP growth rates (annual average compound growth rates) show the same *diverging* trends: for Western Europe they show an increase from 0.12 (1000–1500) to 0.14 (1500–1820) to 0.98 (1820–70), whereas for Asia they show a slower, and then a declining trend: from 0.09 to 0.29 to 0.15. According to Bairoch (1982), China and India actually de-industrialized between 1750 and 1914. While their per capita levels of industrialization were between 70 and 80% of Britain's in 1750, a forty to fiftyfold gap had opened up by 1913![21] These are the comparisons that ultimately matter in this debate.

China's Ecological Endowments and Imperial Windfalls

Revisionists make much of the fact that China was able to feed a population that grew from about 210 million in 1700 to 412 million in 1840. This is an important statistic. Yet what distinguishes, and indeed contrasts, late Imperial China from Western Europe is that while grain production in China kept pace with a growing population, per capita productivity and income stagnated, and no basis for a major transformation of the traditional economy was laid. Total grain output increased by a factor of 5.3 from 1400 to 1820, which was about the same proportion as the population, which rose from 72 million to 381 million (Maddison 1998). Pomeranz recognizes this where he writes "Chinese rural living standards did not improve much, if at all, between 1800 and 1850" (144), even if he attributes (wrongly) the same trend to Europe. In fact, after the 1840s China's population started to decline – to about 360 million by the 1870s, only to rise again above 400 million after 1900.

Pomeranz's entire argument is that ecological problems and economic conditions worsened in China after the 1850s, and not in Europe, only because the Chinese did not have the fortune to "internalize the extraordinary ecological bounty that Europeans gained from the New World," in addition to their cheap underground supplies of

[21] Revisionists like to compare the gross national output of China with that of England and other European nations (Hobson: 76). But this is clearly an inadequate measure for the simple reason that a population in China of 412 million (in 1840) engaged in subsistence activities is bound to produce a significant bulk in output in comparison to a population in England of 14.9 (in 1841) – even though this population was three times as productive per capita by 1820.

coal (11, 229). "Lucky Europe, Normal China," says the sinologist Peter Perdue (2000) in his review of the *Great Divergence*. But once we sift carefully through this book, it becomes clear how tendentious Pomeranz's geographical/ecological perspective really is. Geography is an important factor in his account only when it can be shown that Europe, and Europe alone, was the beneficiary of internal and external ecological endowments, or, conversely, when it can be shown that China did not enjoy any geographical handouts. Thus, if England achieved a breakthrough in the use of coal energy, it was fundamentally a function of "geographic good luck" (66). If China was unable to develop steam engines, even though it understood the basic principle of atmospheric pressure, or so Pomeranz would have us believe, it was because its supplies of coal were located too far from its economic centers (61–63).[22] If Europe had more slack resources and more room for further growth, this was due to the "ironic benefit" of its earlier inefficient use of land resources (211–12, 239). If China had less unused resources and less room for future expansion, this was due to its more efficient use of resources. If Europe had larger amounts of grasslands and pastures that could be converted to arable land, this was because the lands "were sufficiently well-watered" as a "matter of original endowment" (236). If China was unable to convert its remaining grasslands into arable lands, this was the unfortunate accident of its "semi-arid" climes.

In truth, Imperial China was not one bit normal. On a wide range of environmental factors it was exceptional and far luckier than Europe, both in the internal resources it inherited as a "matter of original endowment" and in the truly massive ecological windfall it enjoyed from its own territorial acquisitions after 1500. To start with its imperial windfalls, both Wong and Pomeranz insist that Europe was singularly unique in mounting colonial linkages with its economic peripheries (Wong 2003), or that China could not possibly have benefited as much from its long distance "consensual" trade as Europe did from its coercive trade with the New World (242–53). Modern China,

[22] Huang argues that China had plentiful supplies of coal which could have been used; as they were in fact used after they discovered the uses of steam technology. Pomeranz scored some points in his reply to Huang only to the extent that he pointed to the inadequacies of Huang's reliance on Brenner's dated (1976) ideas and efforts to explain Europe's entire history in terms of the dynamics of the "relations of production".

we are made to believe, was a society uninterested in colonies and without any imperial ambitions. But one only needs to look at the historical geography of China to know that the People's Republic of China one finds in maps today is a very recent creation. Outer China, a vast territory roughly the same size as inner China, populated by Mongols and Turkish and Tibetan stock-raising peoples, was taken over politically only during the course of the 18th century.[23] While the regions of contemporary inner China were under imperial authority by Ming times (1368–1644), at least half of this huge territory was barely colonized by Han migration before 1500, particularly the lands of the southwest: "parts of Guangdong in the east to all of Guangxi, Guizhou, and westward into Yunnan and Sichuan was still largely non-Chinese in population" (Mote 1999: 702–3). This colonial penetration into the jungles of the southwest continued earnestly through the Qing era (1644–1911). While Guizhou, for example, was turned into a province early in Ming times, with considerable Han migration thereafter – sparking major revolts including one that lasted nearly four years (1499–1502) led by a "fierce female rebel leader" from a prominent Yi family – this region still continued to experience intense migratory settlement and exploitation well into the 19th century (Mote 1999: 709). Thus Guizhou yielded wood that was floated out on the rivers and had mines that produced lead, copper, iron, silver, cinnabar and gold. The policies pursued by the Qing government to secure this rich and underdeveloped area included summary justice, limitations on the freedom of movement of the non-Chinese, the building of walled towns, implanting military colonies, confiscating tribal lands and giving them to the Chinese, and a deliberate attempt to smash up tribal cultures. There were three large-scale Miao attempts at liberation, two in the course of the 18th century and one in the middle of the 19th century, all of them unsuccessful (Blunden and Elvin 1992: 38; Gernet, 1990: 487).[24]

In light of these facts, how much weight should we assign to Pomeranz's argument that the Chinese were more successful than the Europeans "at finding *local* palliatives for shortages of land-intensive resources" (242) once we realize that most of these resources came

[23] Gernet (480) writes that "eighteenth century China was the greatest imperialist power in Asia."

[24] Pomeranz does not use the word Chinese "colonization"; on one occasion he writes that "clashes between 'natives' and 'immigrants' were frequent" (247).

from the colonization and outright annexation of non-Han lands? How revealing are Pomeranz's attempts to show that the regions of Guangdong and Guangxi were less used up ecologically than France in the period between 1750 and 1850 once we learn that natives were still the majority in Guangxi in 1600, and that during the Ming dynasty there were 218 tribal uprisings in Guangxi alone, and that "refusals to submit to the pressures of Han colonial settlement and Han political over-lordship continued under the Manchu dynasty and were suppressed in some cases with wholesale massacres of the utmost ferocity" (Blunden and Elvin 1992: 38)?[25]

If we consider that Chinese expansion in the Qing era also involved the appropriation of the large island of Taiwan,[26] including Hainan and, since the end of the 19th century, the land of Manchuria (referred to by Fernand Braudel as "China's America"), we are really left wondering what value there is to the claim that England was a unique beneficiary of colonial resources. Very little, once we consider as well Pomeranz's own observation that the Lower Yangzi, the very region he insists should be compared to England, imported "huge amounts of primary products," including 13 to 18 percent of its total food supply from "outside" and at least 20 to 30 percent of its "labor-saving" fertilizers from Manchuria (226, 289; see also Pomeranz 2002: 582–4). Even if we were to accept the "one China" claim – the argument that China has always been unified and that unification has been the "necessary" course of Chinese history – we have to ask: does a resource have to come from the outside to count as "ecological relief"? If England was fortunate to have convenient access to its supplies of coal, what about the southern tropical regions of China that benefited from extensive sugarcane cultivation, particularly Guangdong, Fukien, Sichuan, and Taiwan? What about the enormous quantity of raw cotton that could be grown in many provinces of China thanks to the moist climate? Cotton was brought to China during the Sung era from Indochina and from

[25] Elsewhere Elvin (1993) presents a rather bleak picture of China's "unsustainable growth from archaic times to the present." Instead of the environmentalist yin-yang image some Westerners have projected onto China, he emphasizes the way this ancient kingdom became "locked-in" to a hydraulic system which required continuous maintenance and further expansion if the system was to continue working. He argues that this hydraulic structure was driven by the "search for state military and political power" and by the "pressure of a population growing at an ever increasing rate" (38–42).

[26] According to Gernet a "rising by the aborigines of Taiwan was crushed amid rivers of blood in 1787–88 by an expeditionary force from the mainland" (1990: 490, for revolts in other colonized regions, see 489–91).

Turkestan. By the late Ming era, it was firmly established in the Yangtze Delta as well as Shantung, becoming one of the most important fiber crops (Bray 1984: 539).“Lucky England” had to cross the Atlantic Ocean to obtain a large proportion of its raw cotton and sugar supplies.

In fact – notwithstanding the legions of books dedicated to the benefits Europe enjoyed from the New World – a strong case can be made in support of Gernet’s general observation that China “was one of the countries which most profited from the discovery of the Americas” (485). It can be argued that China benefited more than Europe from the importation of potatoes and silver. Pomeranz says that the potato “eased the pressures on the land” in Europe insomuch as it “yielded what for Europe were unprecedented amounts of calories per acre” (57). He recognizes that the potato “was also adopted in eighteenth century China and Japan, but almost exclusively as a crop for the highlands…In Europe, where grain yields were much lower…the potato also conquered the lowlands in such densely populated areas as Ireland and Belgium…and, somewhat later, in much of central and eastern Europe” (58). First, let me respond by noting that those European areas in which the potato was adopted were not (with the exception of Belgium) the ones which initiated the industrial revolution and therefore it cannot be argued that the potato facilitated Europe’s industrialization. Secondly, the one region, England, for which Pomeranz makes the strongest case that it was facing Malthusian limitations, and might have thus benefited from the cultivation of potatoes, happened to be a region in which the potato was disdained and “was grown for export rather than for home consumption” (Braudel 1981: 170). In France, too, the potato was not welcomed. “The potato revolution took place there, as elsewhere in Europe, only in the nineteenth century” (Braudel: 170). Thirdly, the fact that the potato was adopted in the Chinese highlands is itself an indication that it was put to cultivation precisely in those regions facing demographic pressures. The potato is a high yielding, nutritious staple, capable of growing in poor soils.

To be sure, China’s post-1750 population growth tended to occur primarily in those poorer regions which had adopted the potato. Pomeranz tells us that “the population of Shandong and Zhili/Hebein increased 40 percent between 1750 and 1870”; now, according to Bray, “by 1800 it [the potato] accounted for almost half the year’s food supply of the poor of Shantung [Shadong]” (532). In Yunnan, too, where “sweet potatoes were in cultivation…by mid-sixteenth century

(Bray: 428), we find that this was one of the areas where, according to Elvin, "the population rose from 3.1 to 6.1 million between 1775 and 1825 in response to opportunities in farming (1983/1992: 147). The potato was also adopted in the marginal lands of the *core* regions of China; by the 18th century it "was grown in all the Yangtze provinces and Szechwan had become a leading producer" (Bray: 532). Actually, by this time, the potato was the third most important food crop in China next to rice and wheat. Chinese peasants also came to rely for their daily survival on maize, peanuts, and tomatoes. The cultivation of peanuts, which also thrived on otherwise useless sandy soils, spread into previously undeveloped areas in Kwangsi and Yunnan during the 18th century (Bray: 428, 518). Bray thinks that, by this time, American new crops "had exerted a transforming effect, allowing the steady population growth to continue despite the greater crowding and pressure on the land" (750).[27]

While Pomeranz questions the claim that silver and gold were central sources of European capital accumulation, he nevertheless argues that it allowed Europeans to trade with the Asians. The Europeans were also "fortunate" that the Chinese were using silver as a store of value and a medium of state payments, for without this demand the mines of the New World would have failed to find a market (160, 190). But what would China have done without the silver acquired, in the first place, by the Europeans? "We must," answers Pomeranz, "imagine either other imports of monetary value or a large reallocation of China's productive resources" (272). Never mind that he never considers Europe's alternative sources apart from the Americas, the fact is that, by Ming times, the silver and copper mines in China were exhausted, and that it was thanks to the intermediary role Europe played in the world silver trade that China became the "great repository" of American silver. This silver "greatly stimulated" those sectors of the economy supplying and serving the export of goods for the world market (Mote: 767–8). In contrast to Europe, where silver flowed in to provide additional liquidity to accompany its own economic growth, and then out, in a relation characterized by a balance of trade deficit with Asia, the silver that

[27] Mote observes that "the Chinese adapted readily to most of these foods [sweet potato, maize, tomatoes]; poorer people in particular came to rely heavily on them for daily fare…By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries these *new crops had exerted a transforming effect, allowing the steady population growth to continue despite greater crowding and pressure on the land* (1999: 750, my italics).

flowed into China did so "to satisfy a growing demand for silver that was linked in China to the use of silver bullion as the *main* medium of exchange" (Findley and O'Rourke 2007: 220). Without this inflow of silver from Europe (and Japan) the expanding Chinese economy would have been deprived of a medium of transaction. It has been estimated that Japan supplied about one-half of Chinese silver imports between 1550 and 1645, whereas the New World supplied about one-quarter and one-third of China's silver requirements. This imported silver sustained China's growing and increasingly monetized and commercialized economy.

Pomeranz confidently asserts that "the huge differences" in population densities between Europe and China stand as "impressive testimony" to the superior technologies of Chinese farming (45). I would argue, rather, that the land productivity differential between preindustrial Europe and China was, in the first instance, a function of their particular land/grain resource endowments. Pomeranz is currently seen as someone who shifted comparative analysis from the cloudy skies of culture to the earthly grounds of geography and ecology. He certainly offers much detail on Chinese consumption of sugar, tobacco, tea, rice, and furniture items, but not a paragraph on the nature of rice cultivation. The only instance in which he makes a reference to the ecology of wet-rice is to point out that the use of water (rather than soil as a fertilizer) "made intensive cropping in south China quite sustainable" (226) – and here he adds a footnote directing readers to Clifford Geertz's book, *Agricultural Involution: the Process of Ecological Change in Indonesia* (1963), for "a classic description of the ecology of paddy rice." What we learn from this book, however, is that behind the striking productive capacity of wet-rice farming is the natural stability or durability of this grain to produce two harvests per year, year after year, without causing any decreases in the fertility of the soil. Even after long years without fertilization, the fertility of the soil does not show any signs of deterioration. The answer to this puzzle, writes Geertz, lies in the nutrients which the irrigation of water brings: in the fixation of nitrogen by the blue-green algae which proliferate in the warm water. The supply and control of water, not the fertility of the soil per se, is the key factor in the wet-rice agriculture. Even if the soil is initially poor, its fertility can be increased through long-term irrigation. The technology of water-control is thus essential: "ditches must be dug and kept clean, sluices constructed and repaired, terraces leveled and dyked; and in more developed true irrigation systems, dams,

reservoirs, aqueducts, tunnels, wells, and the like become necessary" (Geertz 1963: 28–33).[28]

While this hydraulic technology does involve high inputs of labor on a regular basis, once the paddy-fields are properly nurtured with water, they will respond very well to labor-intensive methods of farming. For Geertz, "the sociologically most critical feature of wet-rice agriculture" lies in "its marked tendency to respond to a rising population [by] absorbing increased numbers of cultivators on a unit of cultivated land." This is the meaning of the word "involution." This term, generally associated with the work of Huang, as we saw earlier, is of the utmost significance in understanding the long term dynamic of Chinese agriculture. The meaning it has in Geertz's book is that wet rice farming can sustain long term deterioration in the person/land ratio, because a unit of rice land naturally yields far more than a unit of wheat land – this is so because it responds "very positively to increased care and especially to increased inputs of labor," as Bray puts it (1984: 507). This explains why rice paddies have an enormous ability to feed an ever-increasing number of farmers from the same unit of land.

Bray's detailed book, *Agriculture*, published as Part II of Volume 6, *Biology and Biological Technology*, of Joseph Needham's *Science and Civilization in China*, explains how wet-rice farming allows for many diverse ways to increase productivity without changes in technology or increases in capital outlays, i.e., by planting shoots in exactly spaced rows, by periodic draining of the terraces (which increases aeration), by more frequent and complete weeding, and by sowing seeds in nurseries and transplanting them later to the fields. Of course, as we pointed in chapter two, rice cultivation is a "more tyrannical and enslaving crop than wheat" in that it requires "an enormous concentration of work" (Braudel 1981: 145–49).

But the point is that we cannot presume that China's ability to sustain population increases through the modern era was testimony of its

[28] Bray agrees: the supply of water "is the key factor in rice cultivation, more important than the quality of the soil or the amount of fertilizer used" (1984: 496). John Reader (1988) explains that the exceptional productivity of rice remained a mystery until the 1970s. Nitrogen is the most important plant nutrient; the soil cannot hold nitrate well, under dry-land conditions it is either soon absorbed by the plants or transformed into a gaseous form, "but at the bottom of a flooded rice field this process is slowed down considerably…And while a depth of water slows down the nitrogen cycle at the bottom of the flooded field, it also supports some very useful forms of life [like blue-green algae] at the surface…So all in all, the flooded rice terrace enjoys a remarkably continuous supply of nitrogen" (67–68).

continued technological superiority as compared to Europe. Wheat is a grain that, in clear dissimilarity to rice, "cannot be cultivated on the same land for two years running without serious harmful effects" (Braudel 1981: 114). The fields must be rotated. This is why the land in Europe was divided into three-field systems, with a field, say, used for winter wheat, another for spring oats, and another left fallow. There was always a part of the land lying fallow. This part had to be fertilized with manure, and the main source of manure was livestock, which meant that if the fertility of the land was to be retained, more land had to be reserved for horses and cattle, as grasslands at the expense of arable land. This grassland, to be sure, was not wasted since it was used to feed animals which provided traction power, dairy products, and meat. It was well understood in Europe that the best way to increase productivity per unit of land was to shorten or eliminate the fallow period. This technique developed in a steadier fashion from the 1500s onwards by adding forage crops to the rotation; that is, instead of leaving the land fallow Europeans began to plant crops like beet and cabbage, which had the double benefit of restoring to the land key minerals and providing fodder for horses and cattle. This was a crucial component of the agricultural revolution which, as we saw above, began to make real headway after the 1700s.

The seed-yield ratios of Europe were naturally inferior to China's: rice always produced higher yields per seed sown than wheat. As Braudel observes, "wheat's unpardonable fault was its low yield… Wherever one looks, from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century, the results were disappointing. For every grain sown, the harvest was unusually no more than five and sometimes less" (1981: 120). While the average seed-to-yield ratio in medieval Sung China was already quite outstanding at 1:20 or even at 1:30, the average wheat ratio in England over the modern period 1500–1700 was 1:7 (Cipolla 1980: 123). Jones makes the same observation: comparison in terms of seed yield ratios "is unfavorable to Europe…the oriental alluvial river-basins were more productive of plant life" (2003: 8). Now, it is true that in northern China where wheat was grown, the yield-to-seed ratio was also higher than Europe's (Bray 1984: 379, 476). Without getting into a complicated discussion on the respective environmental advantages and disadvantages of Europe and China, I would draw attention, however, to the organically-rich loess lands located in North China with their exceptional porosity and their ability to remain fertile with only enough water (Lattimore 1940: 27–47).

Ping-Ti Ho (1975) believes that these loess lands, not the great flood plain of the Yellow River, were the cradle of Chinese Neolithic culture. The earliest sites of Chinese agriculture were clustered along numerous small rivers and streams within the drainage of the Yellow River. The rise of Chinese civilization was made possible by the development of small-scale irrigation networks along these tributary rivers. This environment was "restrictive in some ways (in terms of the extremities of climate, relative scarcity of plant resources, light rainfall), but in one particular way it was "uniquely favorable" (45–8). Unlike the slash-and-burn method of cultivation, which initiated agriculture in the Near East, and which was dictated by the inability of the soil to restore its fertility without long periods of fallow, the loess of China had a "self-fertilizing capacity" (49–50). The crucial element in the productive capacity of the loess was for the land to conserve moisture. As long as farmers maintained this moisture, crops could be raised continuously on the same unit of land without fertilizing additions. Ping-Ti Ho thus concludes that "it was largely nature, more specifically the loess," which shaped the "self-sustaining character" of the northern agricultural system (56). With the introduction of large-scale irrigation and major hydraulic works during the 3rd century BC, which clearly required much human effort and ingenuity, the population of North China, which was already quite sizable during the Shang dynasty (1766–1027 BCE), increased to levels unmatched anywhere else in the world.

China, the world's oldest continuous civilization and the dominant cultural center of East Asia, occupies today 7 percent of the world's land surface but makes up 25 percent of the world's population. India has a higher population density, but the amount of arable land in India is much higher at 57 percent, whereas the amount in China is only 11 percent (Reader 1990: 183). The amount of arable land in Europe is roughly around 30 percent. During Han times (206BC–220AD), when settlement to the still-to-be cultivated rice lands of the Lower Yangzi was in the early stages, and the inhabitants were concentrated in the central and lower valleys of the Yellow River, the official census of AD 2 recorded a population of 58 million (Ebrey 2000: 73). The population of Europe to the Ural Mountains, by contrast, was 26 million in AD 600. The Aztecs had a population of five million, which was probably twice that of ancient Egypt. China's population did not rise above a maximum of 60 to 70 million in the millennium before the Song period (960–1279), which suggests that North China had reached a Malthusian

wall, but as farmers migrated southwards, and wet-rice agriculture expanded steadily in the Yangzi Delta, and new varieties of early ripening rice were introduced, the population reached about 120 million by the early 1200s (Ebrey: 184).

There is no denying the ingenuity of Chinese farmers engaged in multi-cropping, terracing, transplanting, dredging, sowing, and winnowing; their steady determination and astuteness in turning hillsides, marches, lakes, and sea-shores into fertile lands. My point is that one cannot properly speak about Europe's geographical "windfalls," or China's superior agrarian techniques, without a careful balance-sheet of the environmental pluses and minuses of the western and the eastern extremities of Eurasia. The variety and contrasts are endless. There is no simple answer, but the question cannot be avoided.[29]

[29] Bray states that Chinese society consisted of "two highly contrasted natural environments…the continental zone of the Northern plains and the subtropical zone south of the Yangzi…of dry-grain and wet-rice agriculture (xxiv–xxv). But it should be added that both regions were dominated by hydraulic works; the labor requirements in handling the unruly Huang Ho were intensive due to recurrent flooding, sediment clogging, dyking, and leveling. To this, see the vivid account offered by Cressey (1955) which, in my view, is still the best geographical study of China to date. It should be noted that the combination of arable and animal husbandry was an advantage to Europe; it was "one of the most important differences distinguishing our western, technological, civilization from those of the Far East" (Bloch 1966: 24).

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CONTINUOUS CREATIVITY OF EUROPE

> Borrowings…a way of thinking, of believing, or living, or just simply a tool…is one of the best touchstones by which to judge the vitality and originality of a civilization. Braudel, *On History*
>
> Some would say that Eurocentrism is bad for us, indeed bad for the world, hence to be avoided. Those people should avoid it. As for me, I prefer truth to goodthink. I feel surer of my ground. Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*.

Hobson and the Eastern Origins of the West

In this chapter I will argue that the "standard" Eurocentric historiography on the rise of the West still holds much value despite the persistent criticisms it has faced in the last decades. The standard historiography includes the classical exponents of Europe's uniqueness (Montesquieu, Smith, Hegel, Marx, and Weber), as well as contemporary historians and sociologists who have taken on this debate directly (Landes, Hall, Jones, Braudel, Needham, Cipolla, Mokyr, Jacob, and Parker). My interest in this chapter is with the contemporary exponents. In defending their perspectives, I will go beyond them by taking into account numerous additional sources from historians of Europe who have written about Western achievement from the Greeks onward.[1]

I will defend the most important contributions of Eurocentrics starting with a close textual contestation of John M. Hobson's *Eastern Origins of Western Civilization* (2004), but including as well Eric Mielants's *The Origins of Capitalism and the 'Rise of the West'* (2007), Jack Goldstone's extended essay, "Efflorescences and Economic Growth in World History: Rethinking the 'Rise of the West' and the Industrial Revolution" (2002b), and other revisionist sources. Hobson's book claims to be a point by point refutation of the Eurocentrics. It argues that the technologies, institutional arrangements, and ideas associated

[1] I have drawn parts of the beginning section of this chapter from an earlier publication (2009).

with Western uniqueness since medieval times were initiated in the Near East, India, and China. This book thus provides us with an opportunity to broaden this discussion beyond a comparative economic history of the 1700s and 1800s. This chapter will cover the Portuguese voyages of discovery, the Gutenberg revolution, the invention of mechanical clocks, the cartographic revolution, the Protestant reformation, the "industrial enlightenment," the "military revolution," the "rational" mercantilist state, and more.

If you are an admirer of Western civilization be warned: Hobson (2004) is out to tell you that: i) most technologies associated with medieval and early modern Europe – heavy iron plough, watermills, mechanical clocks, printing press – came from the East; ii) the Italians were not the pioneers of the bill of exchange, bookkeeping, insurance and banking, but borrowed these from the more advanced commercial world of the Indian Ocean and the Far East; iii) the navigational techniques that enabled Vasco da Gama to set sail in 1498, including the astrolabe, mariner's compass, the lateen sail, the sternpost rudder and square hull were invented and refined in the Islamic world and the Far East; iv) neither the Portuguese nor the Dutch had the military capacity and the commercial weight to impose themselves on the Indian Ocean between 1500 and 1750–1800; v) the progressive scientific and philosophical ideas of the Enlightenment "were directly transmitted from the East;" vi) the main technological innovations associated with the British Industrial Revolution were first employed by the Chinese in the eleventh century; vii) Asia was ahead of the West in gross output, technological capacity, and per capita income as late as the 1850s.

So what did the Europeans accomplish that permitted them eventually to achieve global dominance? Like most revisionists, Hobson prioritizes colonial profits and resources. What distinguishes him is his emphasis on Europe's creation of a militaristic state dedicated to the subjugation, in the most "devious" ways, of the lands of others. For thousands of years Europeans played with the cultural gifts of the East in the backyard of the world, but eventually they constructed their own original political identity: a "modern" state driven by a "racist restlessness" that enabled it to conquer the more peaceful cultures of the world and thus rise (temporarily) after the 1850s (219–242). The Europeans, Hobson insists, were the first people to categorize themselves as the best race of the planet with an imperial mission to colonize, civilize and exploit the primitive savages of the world. This identity functioned

as an ideological justification for the aggressive policies of the distinctive European state.

The problem with Hobson's wide-ranging attack is simple: i) he relies on outdated sources, ii) he seriously misreads/misinterprets classic sources, and iii) he rarely investigates current ideas. The book is filled with statements such as:

> Eurocentrism depicts India as a classic case of an oriental despot – a brutal, insatiable Leviathan – which in sucking the economy dry of resources, created a backward and static economy that was isolated from the mainstream of international trade (79).
>
> Eurocentric historians typically view the rise of Europe after 1000 in terms of a self-contained or autonomous regional economy or civilization (117).

Eurocentric Historians

The source Hobson mentions, one which apparently depicts the Indian state as a "brutal Leviathan" sucking a "static economy," happens to be a book published in 1923, *From Akbar to Aurangzeb*, by W.H. Moreland. Did Hobson really need to go back eighty years in scholarship to find a "conventional" source on India? He could have examined John A. Hall's well-known book, *Powers and Liberties,* originally published in 1985. In Hall he would have met a worthwhile opponent with a cohesive thesis exploring the factors that hindered the rise of modern capitalism in the world's major civilizations. He would have encountered a different "standard" account on the power of the Indian state: "my [Hall's] argument has been that social identity was provided by a religiously sanctioned order, and that politics, bereft of much opportunity to organize social life, had such shallow roots that it was fundamentally unstable" (1992:76). Hall explains how the country was kept together more by caste than by politics. While the Muslims who invaded India eventually united major regions to create the Mughal Empire, they did not destroy the traditional hegemony of the Brahmins.

Hobson could have also debated David Landes's *Wealth and Poverty of Nations*[2] (1998). This book recognizes that India's economy

[2] His promise in the opening pages that he will take on Landes's book is hardly fulfilled.

"produced the world's finest cotton yarn and textiles…India had a large and skilled workforce" (155). One could get the impression that Indian commerce was insignificant from Jacob Van Leur's 1955 study of Indonesian trade, a work Hobson refers to as typically Eurocentric. In contrast, Landes's work describes a "flourishing network of trade linking Asia from east to west" (155). The Portuguese only brought things to trade that were "near to worthless in India, which knew the difference between trash and precious things and made far better fabrics than Europe" (88). What the Portuguese did have was superior naval power and a rationalized, methodical approach to exploration, as is evident in the systematic instructions given to Diogo Lopes de Sequeira in 1508 for the exploration of Madagascar, which Landes cites in rich detail (92–3). This methodical approach, conscious and directed, was unique at the time. The Spanish only adopted it during the last quarter of the sixteenth century.

Landes's book also argues that Britain, "by comparison" to other polities, "had the early advantage of being a nation…not simply a state or political entity, but a self-conscious, self-aware unit characterized by a common identity and loyalty and by equality of civil status" (154–57, 219). He draws a sensible comparative contrast between the English "national" state and the "predatory" Mughal state manned by administrators lacking ethnic identification with their localities. Landes, however, leaves the reader asking for more details regarding the emergence of an English sense of nationhood before the age of nationalism. These details, ones which Hobson could also have relied on, are contained in Liah Greenfeld's *The Spirit of Capitalism, Nationalism and Economic Growth* (2001) where he argues that already in the sixteenth century English commercial elites were infused with a sense of national purpose which elevated the prestige of their self-interested pursuits by clothing them with a collective ethos. By tying the pursuit of individual gain with England's national greatness, this "unique form of social consciousness" allowed England to make the transition to modern economic growth, in contrast to the "equally Calvinist Dutch Republic" which lacked a strong sense of nationhood (2001: 1–58).

Any serious debate on Eurocentrism requires taking these ideas into account rather than relying on claims found in unknown dated sources. The classic author Fernand Braudel is cited by Hobson in support of the idea that the economic activity of Islam after 800 was "capitalist" and thus not backward (43), but also in support of "the standard Eurocentric claim" that Chinese metallurgy did not progress further

after the thirteenth century" (71). What Braudel really believed is that, by the sixteenth century, Europe had certain legal, military, and intellectual features that set it apart from other civilizations. Hobson's dilemma is that Braudel, as we saw earlier, articulated this view without arguing that Europe was a self-contained civilization, and without characterizing the East as "static" or "backward". Braudel knew that early Medieval Europe inherited much from the ancient Mediterranean and from Islam and China. It was in the sixteenth century that he saw Europe staking out a position in the global economy. But he did not shy away from tracing the cultural origins of this civilization in Ancient Greek "rationalism" and arguing that "one of the secrets" of Europe's progress was the development of towns enjoying municipal liberties.

Many of the sources Hobson employs to back up his arguments were written by Eurocentric scholars themselves. Hobson thus draws on Eric Jones to attack the "idiom" that Britain was "the first industrializer" for the purpose of making the counter-argument that eleventh-century Sung China experienced "the first industrial miracle" (51). Jones, let us recall, is the author of *The European Miracle* (orig. 1981), the "canonical" work of Eurocentric economic historians. This is why Jones is one of the authors James Blaut examines in his *Eight Eurocentric Historians* (2000). Hobson does not rely on the *European Miracle,* but on a book Jones published later in 1988, *Growth Recurring: Economic Change in World History*. This book is no less preoccupied with Europe's divergence than the *European Miracle*. I cited this book in chapter two in support of the argument that the growth China saw after the 1400s did *not* involve increases in per capita productivity. *Growth Recurring* argues that Sung China, from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries, and Tokugawa Japan, from 1600 to 1868, experienced per capita productivity growth. This observation was not new. McNeill (1982) and Elvin (1973) described the Sung "economic revolution" as the greatest outburst of economic activity prior to modern times in transportation, money circulation, credit, and industry. Indeed, Robert Hartwell, in a series of well known articles published half a century ago (1962, 1966, 1967), estimated that Sung China was producing something in the order of 120,000 to 150,000 tons of iron in 1078, a figure far in excess of anything Britain would accomplish before the Industrial Revolution. This is precisely why historians have long asked the "why not" question: why a society "on the brink" of the "world's first industrial revolution" began to decline and stagnate in the fourteenth century?

In other words, Hobson uses the arguments of Jones, a classical Eurocentric author, against the "standard Eurocentric view". Hobson, to his credit, scores points against a few dated sources, such as an article by Frederick Lane published in 1963, which claimed that only Europeans developed a mechanical outlook (60). He ignores James McClellan and Harold Dorn's *Science and Technology in World History* (1999), a popular text with chapters on the great technological achievements of all non-Western cultures. This book summarizes the major findings of many scholars in the field and, more specifically, recognizes Chinese priority in the inventions of the spinning wheel; water-powered reeling machines; movable types; iron furnaces that smelted ore with coke; gunpowder and its use in rockets, grenades, and mortars; the magnetic compass; ships armed with cannons, maps using various grid systems; mechanical clocks; and, many other ingenious devices (121–26).

The question that calls for answers is why China did not experience a Scientific Revolution 1500 despite all indicators to the contrary? I think McClellan and Dorn's book offers a number of reasonable arguments in response to this question, all of which Hobson should have evaluated. Drawing on the important works of Derk Bodde, *Chinese Thought, Society, and Science: The Intellectual and Social Background of Science and Technology in Pre-Modern China* (1991), Toby Huff's *Rise of Early Modern Science, Islam, China, and the West* (1993), and G. E. R. Lloyd's *Adversaries and Authorities: Investigations into Ancient Greek and Chinese Science* (1996), McClellan and Dorn make the following points: 1) In Chinese society "no separate occupation or distinct profession of science existed." While there were numerous schools, none offered instruction in the sciences and unlike European universities they lacked legal autonomy over educational matters. Their whole focus "was careerist and directed to preparing students to take the state civil service exams." 2) There were many sciences but these were practical and there was no "notion of pure science pursued for its own sake." Although by the 13th century "the Chinese had become the greatest algebraists in the world," Chinese mathematicians "never developed a formal geometry, logical proofs, or deductive mathematical systems such as those found in Euclid." 3) The Chinese style of thinking was correlative or associative, and strove to find analogies and relations between diverse things, rather than looking at nature as a separate entity working according to universal laws that could be understood in terms of cause-effect relations, self-evident definitions, and logical inferences (121–149).

The question "why modern science originated only in Europe" is actually known as the "Needham Problem." When Needham started his ground-breaking research back in the 1940s he sought to challenge what was then the dominant intellectual outlook in the West: That China had failed to cultivate a highly sophisticated scientific tradition of its own. His impressive multivolume work, *Science and Civilization in China* (1954–1984), was decisive in the revision of this outlook. His conclusion was clear: it was primarily the "social and economic life of Chinese society" – the transition in China from feudalism to bureaucratism rather than to modern capitalism – "which could not but condition at every step the science and philosophy of the Chinese people" (in Chan 1957: 332) This bureaucratism, which curtailed the independence of merchants and towns, was not favorable to the autonomous maturity of a "universal" scientific culture characterized by the "mathematization of hypotheses about nature, combined with relentless experimentation" (Needham 1999: 7).

Needham did observe that, prior to the 17th century, China transmitted to Europe important scientific discoveries – magnetism, alchemy, observational astronomy, cosmology, and mechanical measurement of time – that went into the making of the Newtonian Revolution. At the same time he was aware that the Chinese scientific principles of recurring cycles, the Yin and the Yang, and the Five Elements were incommensurable with the Greek legacy of natural laws, and the closely related science of the Muslim world and Renaissance Europe. He seriously considered the standing argument that in the Judeo-Christian tradition there was a concept of natural law in the sense that a supreme God had given laws that nature obeys; and that in Europe, by the 17th century, "two distinct conceptions of natural law [had] come to be differentiated: law as valid for all human beings and laws obeyed by everything in nature that is not human" (in Cohen 1994: 454). When Needham examined Chinese philosophies, none of them contained concepts that came close to this differentiation. This may explain why Needham felt comfortable with the conclusion that "Western science…developed on the whole without the benefit of either Indian or Chinese contributions" (in Cohen: 438).

Western scholars, as I argued in the first chapter, have long been tackling the problem of ethnocentrism. Their critique of ethnocentrism reflects the way European culture embodies what Hegel would call a "negativity" about itself, a kind of questioning that constitutes its peculiar energy. Needham's passionate interest in Chinese history and

culture was outstanding but not atypical. One could place Needham's enthusiasm and curiosity in a line that goes back to the journeys of Marco Polo, a Venetian merchant, whose portrayal of China was that of an urban culture of dazzling riches and prosperity (Larner 1999); or even back to Herodotus' *Histories* and its fascinating ethnographic tales of the Scythians, Sarmatians, Egyptians, and Phoenicians.

Imitation, Innovation, and Invention

Hobson has a hard time finding a single Eurocentric author advocating a crude and one-sided view on the rise of the West. What makes Landes, Braudel, and Needham European-centered is their belief, I will argue, that sometime in the medieval to early modern era, Europe "took a path that set it decisively apart from other civilizations" (Landes 1998: 31). This idea is regularly confused with the claim that medieval/early modern Europe was already more advanced in terms of overall economic performance and technological capability. Historians of Europe may deserve some blame for this confusion. I agree in part with Pomeranz, Goldstone, and Hobson that certain economic trends attributed to early modern Europe were also observable in Asia: "Technical improvements in agriculture and production providing rising total output and per capita productivity … vast urban-based regional and global trade networks supporting wealthy merchant classes" were evident in China, Japan, and India (Goldstone 2002: 330). Unfortunately, Landes does not pay enough attention to the economic dynamism of Eastern societies in the early modern era. The point remains, however, that the growth exhibited by even the most advanced Asian civilization – in this case China – was based on the extension of the same epistemic bases of technology already present in the Sung era. There is no contradiction between the estimation that Medieval Europe "seems more vigorous and creative than any of the other great centers of civilized tradition from the twelfth century onwards," and the same author's observation that Sung China (960–1279) was the most advanced economic civilization of the world (Roberts 1995: 522). The question for debate is whether the Middle Ages did see the *birth* of "a new society" which "made Europe very different from civilizations around" (Landes: 31–5).

Let us start our response by considering another interesting author discussed by Hobson, Carlo Cipolla, who is employed to play both

roles: for and against Eurocentrism. Now, it is true that Cipolla focuses on Europe's technological achievements from the 12th century onwards, and that he barely pays attention to the technological expertise of the Chinese. But dated as he may be in this respect, Cipolla did capture an essential point about European medieval uniqueness in the area of technological innovation and invention:

> Europe always proved extraordinarily receptive, and the enthusiastic curiosity of Marco Polo is emblematic of this attitude. But this is not the whole story. From the twelfth century on western Europe developed an original inventiveness which manifested itself in a rapid crescendo of new ideas. Spectacles, the mechanical clock, artillery of sailing ships and new navigational techniques, together with a thousand other innovations big and small, were the original product of European experimental curiosity and imagination. It must also be noted that when Europe absorbed new ideas from outside, it did not do so in a purely passive and imitative manner, but often adapted them to local conditions or to new uses with distinct elements of originality (1980: 171, 180).

Hobson would no doubt reply that Europe absorbed practically everything from the outside in a passive and imitative way. He fully endorses Robert Temple's popularization of Needham's work in *The Genius of China* (1999). Temple believes that "most of the genius of mankind's advance was Chinese rather than European," and even claims that the modern economy as a whole was created in China and then imported by Europeans with only minimal alterations (9). We can leave aside Temple's absurd claim that Newtonian science itself came out of China.[3]

In defense of Cipolla, let me say from the start that a distinctive trait shown by Europeans was their willingness to imitate inventions made by foreigners, in contrast to the Chinese who ceased to be as inventive after the Sung era, and showed little enthusiasm for outside ideas and inventions. Landes's argument is never that medieval Europe was

[3] He writes: "William Harvey did not discover the circulation of the blood in the body…Isaac Newton was not the first to discover his First Law of Motion" (9). Needham never came to such conclusions; he thought the Chinese had passed on to the West certain key ideas related to magnetism, alchemy, cosmology, and the measurement of time, but we now know that Needham exaggerated the importance of these contributions; his assessment was, if I may quote Cohen, "heavily flawed on several counts, of which the most important are the absence of sources that even begin to point at transmission" (1994: 418–82). Needham knew he was "preaching" a case in order to redress the lack of knowledge regarding Chinese science; in doing so he "sometimes overemphasized the Chinese contributions".

wealthier, richer, and more developed. Instead, it is that Europe, from the 12th century onwards, showed itself to be a great learner, whereas China after the Sung era showed itself to be "a reluctant improver and a bad learner" (336).

The Europeans did not invent the heavy plough mounted on wheels with an iron cutter, but they did improve and adapt it to the wet, heavy soils of Northern Europe. They did not invent the horse collar and the horseshoe, but they did substitute the horse for the ox as a draft animal. They did not invent the stirrup, but they did improve it to create a new style of warfare: "mounted shock combat." They did not invent water mills but they did improve upon new accessory devices (cranks, toothed gears), which made the application of water power (with reciprocating motion) possible in a wide variety of machines such as sawmills and flourmills (Landes: 45–6).

Let us not forget that sometimes "imitation means innovation, which, in turn, often stimulates invention" (Cardwell 2001: 31). The Europeans *did* invent eyeglasses, which doubled the working life of skilled craftsmen, and made it possible for them to do fine work and use fine instruments, and also encouraged them to go beyond the astrolabe used by the Muslims to originate gauges, micrometers, fine wheel cutters, all of which were the beginnings of precision tools, replication, and the principle of standardization. Europe had monopoly on corrective lenses for 300–400 years. Europeans also invented the mechanical clock.

Revolution in Time

Temple says that Su Sung's great astronomical clock of 1092 "was a mechanical clock rather than a water clock, even though its power came from falling water or mercury." He adds, "knowledge of its principles spreading to Europe led to the development of mechanical clocks in the West two centuries later" (105, 110). On this question, Temple follows Needham, who was naturally impressed by his finding of Su Sung's long-forgotten book with diagrams and descriptions of his clock, and concluded that Chinese horologists were the forerunners of the European mechanical clock, and was convinced that this clock "was one of the greatest technical achievements of the medieval in any civilization" Citing this passage, Hobson employs Needham against Landes's claim that the Chinese were unable to make

mechanical clocks. Hobson thinks the trick to making mechanical clocks lay in the invention of "the escapement mechanism" which "regulates the movement of the shafts and dials to ensure accurate timekeeping" (131). The Chinese, he says, invented this mechanism in 725, and he believes there is evidence that this device was transmitted to the West by the Muslims because "all the techniques and mechanisms of the European clock, including the automata, complex gear-trains and segmental gears as well as the weight-drive and audible signals, were present in Andalusian horology" (131).

None of what Hobson says, however, addresses Landes's carefully weighted opposition to Needham, which is detailed in his book, *Revolution in Time* (1983). Chinese horology never got beyond the principle called clepsydra, which is the measurement of time by the continuous flow of water. The Sung Chinese brought to its culmination the water clock line of horological development. The Europeans, on the other hand, started a whole new line of clock technology based on a true mechanical or kinematic principle of measurement. The "escapement mechanism" by itself is not the key. Since there is so much confusion about this difference, and not just from Hobson, it is worth citing Landes's explanation of the different principles of operation as explained in his *Revolution in Time*:

> Both techniques used escapements, but these have only the name in common. The Chinese one worked intermittently; the European, in discrete but continuous beats. Both systems used gravity as the prime mover, but the action was very different. In the mechanical clock, the falling weight exerted a continuous and even force on the train, which the escapement alternately held back and released at a rhythm constrained by the controller. Ingeniously, the very force that turned the scape wheel then slowed it and pushed it part of the way back…In other words, a unidirectional force produced a self-reversing action: about one step back for three steps forward. In the Chinese timekeeper, however, the force exerted varied, the weight in each successive bucket building until sufficient to tip the release and lift the stop that held the wheel in place. This allowed the wheel to turn some ten degrees and bring the next bucket under the stream of water while the stop fell back…In the Chinese clock, then unidirectional force produced unidirectional motion (18–19).

Landes knows that early mechanical clocks were less accurate than the Chinese water-wheel clocks. The important difference is that, by Sung times, water clock techniques had "come about as far as they could, whereas the mechanical clock marked the beginning of a new

technology" (1983: 20). Water-clock technology is intrinsically limited due to many destabilizing factors, including corrosion, dirt, and the temperature of the water. The mechanical clock is inherently capable of far greater precision and has far greater developmental possibilities. If Needham thinks the Chinese escapement can be seen as an anticipation or precedent of the mechanical escapement, the historical reality is that after the invention of a few astronomical water clocks in the Tang and Sung era, Chinese horology stagnated and then retrogressed. Needham imagines that this escapement device was transmitted to Europeans but says that "the details of any transmission are still obscure;" and Landes convincingly argues that no historical source has so far been discovered showing any clear transmission. Besides, if true, this transmission would still not explain the invention of a clock that measured time; not according to the continuous flow of water, but instead as a regular, repeating sequence of discrete actions. Furthermore, it does not explain the rapid spread of this new mechanical machine nor the "relentless pressure to improve technique and design" (1998: 49) from the first crude mechanical clocks, which kept time so imperfectly that they had to be continually adjusted, to the spectacular improvement in precision that Christian Huygens (1656) achieved by replacing the balance-wheel regulator with a pendulum.

What critics like Hobson refuse to accept is the cumulative, self-reinforcing process of assimilation, innovation and invention set in motion in Europe from about the 12th century onwards in all facets of life. Europe not only learned and improved upon the practical sciences and techniques of China; it also absorbed and bettered the theoretical sciences of Islamic civilization. This does not mean that originality and innovation were absent in Muslim science. Islam preserved the heritage of Greek science, extended its range, and strengthened the foundation on which modern science was later built. I can sympathize with critics who chastise Landes for neglecting this originality, even where he writes that "from about 750 to 1100…Islam was Europe's teacher." This inventiveness, in any case, has long been carefully documented by a Western scholarly tradition in Near Eastern studies dating back to the 1950s. Multicultural historians were hardly the first to tell us that Muslims transmitted the Chinese technique of paper making to Europe; that they relayed from the Hindus "Arabic" numerals, the decimal system and the concept of zero; and, that they translated, corrected, and extended the Aristotelian heritage of

Classical Greece.[4] Historians focusing on Europe's originality after about 1100 *presuppose* this Islamic achievement.

During the thirteenth and fourteenth century Islamic science went into decline, and the question "how this came about?" cannot be avoided. By 1200, Europe had recovered much of the scientific and philosophical accomplishment produced within the rest of the world. Persian, Byzantine, Chinese, Indian, African, and Islamic cultures were essential ingredients in Europe's ascendancy. Affirming the uniqueness of Western civilization in no way implies the idea that Europe can be viewed as a self-contained civilization. A major secret of European creativeness was precisely its multicultural inheritance and its wider geographical linkages with the peoples of the world.[5] At the same time, the "Europe" the Hellenes adopted as a name for their territory to the west of the Aegean, in self-awareness of their peculiar distinction as citizens with self-governing assemblies, had significant traits that could be contrasted to the Near East and Asia as a whole. The Greeks, whom we shall consider in the next chapters, invented scientific reasoning by offering explanations of natural events that were entirely

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[4] I welcome readers to look at the bibliographic notes in Hobson's book (327, 341, 352, 354) and observe how many Western-based sources he cites from the 1960s through to the 1980s to back up his "anti-Eurocentric" arguments – some sources are actually dated as early as 1895, 1926, 1933, 1944, 1945, and 1946. On a related matter, concerning Edward Said's accusations against Western "orientalism," I recommend Ibn Warraq's book, *Defending the West: A Critique of Edward Said's Orientatlism* (2007). Warraq characterizes Said's arguments as "intellectual terrorism" in the way he "seeks to convince not by arguments or historical analysis but by spraying charges of racism, imperialism, and Eurocentrism from a moral high ground; anyone who disagrees with Said has insult heaped upon him." As for the claim that French and British studies of Islamic lands were part of an imperialist plan, Warraq observes that the first French university chair in Arab studies was founded in 1538 and the first British one in 1633, long before any French or British imperial adventures in the region. Said's countless admirers might want to consider how it was that such an established mass media outlet as *Time-Life Books* released in the 1960s a series called *Great Ages of Man: A History of the World's Cultures* that included volumes on the histories of all the major civilizations of the world. These volumes were not only fair but quite generous in their evaluation of non-Western contributions. Desmond Steward's *Early Islam* (1967), for example, is filled with praises, such as: "From the dawn of Islam…until the…Mongol nomads sacked the Muslim capital of Bagdad in 1258 — Islam was the world's most challenging religion, its strongest political force and its most vital culture" (11–12).

[5] As Braudel expresses it, "The West has benefited from its position at the meeting point of innumerable cultural currents. It absorbed all sorts of different things for centuries and from all directions, even from dead civilization, before being able in turn to give out and radiate" (1980: 205). No one has ever argued that Europe was self-contained.

general; thinking of the universe as a single entity or "cosmos" with an underlying mathematical reality comprehensible through deduction and proof. This tradition was not transmitted to Europeans by the Muslims on their own. The Romans had welcomed Greek teachers to bring the study of the Greek language, literature, philosophy, and the idea of an education in the humanities. By the last century of the Republic, with the Greek legacy copiously assimilated, the Romans were ready to produce their own towering literary figures in the names of Cicero, Lucretius, Virgil, Horace, Ovid, and Livy. Just an outline of the contributions of Romans to the Western tradition would require a separate chapter; suffice it to say that some of their most enduring achievements were the cultivation of an intricate system of legal concepts that reflected the individuality of each person, and the expansion of the Greek idea of citizenship to all citizens regardless of ethnicity as long as they accepted Roman law and paid taxes.

By the end of the thirteenth century, both Islamic and Chinese civilizations were past the pinnacle of their creativity, whereas by 1000 Europe was gearing up for a period of cumulative progression, possibly richer in originality, boldness, and spiritedness than any other cultural efflorescence witnessed since the Ancient Greeks.[6] This progression would be no mere revival of the classical heritage, assimilation of Islamic culture, or imitation of Chinese inventions.[7] It would be, as Norman Cantor writes,

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[6] In chapter eight I will address the indispensable contribution of the Germanic "barbarian" age from about 500 to 1000 AD.

[7] There is considerable disagreement when Islamic science started to show signs of stagnation. David Lindberg (1992) limits the heyday of Islamic creativity to the period between 800 and 1100. He thinks that by 1200 Europe had recovered much of the Greek scientific and philosophical legacies nurtured by the Muslims. Toby Huff (1993) believes that, up until the fourteenth century, Arabic science remained "promising" and was sufficiently developed "as to be called the most advanced in the world." In the case of astronomy, he says the supremacy lasted until the mid-1500s, until Copernicus came (204). At the same time, Huff argues that the cultural and institutional foundations of the rise of modern science in Europe were already set in place during the 12th and 13th centuries. Saliba (2007) tries to paint an image of a highly creative Islamic tradition lasting well into the 16th century and producing the Italian Renaissance. Huff (2008) counters that Saliba's thesis is based on the supposition that the mere presence of literate men in Muslim lands bespeaks of scientists engaged in outstanding work. The Italian Renaissance, in any case, was energized less by the discovery of Greek philosophy (though many of Plato's dialogues were rediscovered) than by the rediscovery of the Roman literary tradition, Livy's *History of Rome*, Tacitus and his *Annals*, the essays of Seneca, the comedies of Plautus, the poems of Virgil, Ovid, Lucretius, and Horace – the very type of (classical) literature Muslims were indifferent to.

> a starting point for new directions and dimensions in all facets of civilized life: religion, law, government, economy, ethics, and education, as well as in art, literature, philosophy, and science(1994: 305).

The literature on this intense creativity, as we shall partly see in the next chapter, is readily available but ignored by Hobson, and in the main by Frank, Goldstone, Wong, and Pomeranz, who prefer to focus instead on the "real" world of Malthusian dynamics, resource constraints, and economic growth where the assumption is that changes in art, philosophies, religion, and even in scientific outlooks, are not relevant to the uniqueness and the divergence of the West. But even when one looks at efforts to portray China after the Sung era as a progressive civilization on par with Europe, one finds little that challenges the idea that the expansion of Ming and Qing China was based on the extension of the old paradigm of development.

The Printing Revolution

Hobson is adamant that China, in particular, pioneered not only European medieval technologies but also many of the techniques that came to underpin the Renaissance, the age of Oceanic exploration, the European military revolution, and even the British industrial revolution. Examining Hobson's argument, the reader will no doubt notice that the technologies he says were invented and diffused by the Chinese came mostly from the Sung era. He offers no examples of Chinese inventions in the Ming and Qing dynasties because, in truth, there was no cumulative innovation after the precocious Tang and Sung dynasties. Meanwhile, as Europe continue to experience alterations, conversions, transitions, reformations and revolutions, one finds Hobson chasing, with his pen, one European epochal change after another – the printing revolution, the discovery of America, the rounding of the Cape, the Galilean Revolution, the Enlightenment – trying to convince his readers, with ever less credibility, that it was the borrowing of Eastern inventions and ideas that enabled these developments. Yet he barely carries the day showing that China invented the main technologies used in medieval (and Renaissance) Europe. We already saw his incomplete argument about mechanical clocks. Let's take the additional claim that Gutenberg did not invent the first printing press but simply benefited from the diffusion of ideas of movable-type printing technologies already invented in the eleventh century in

China, and of movable-metal-type printing presses first invented in Korea in 1403.

The "standard" contention recognizes the priority of Chinese and Korean printing; it interprets Gutenberg's press as a recombination of principles and ideas about printing that were already around into something that was very different from previous techniques. It argues that Gutenberg should be credited with solving the problem of making type cheaply and accurately. The Chinese script (and by extension the Korean script) could not be readily adapted to mechanical use. "The Roman alphabet, universal in Europe," writes Cardwell, "with its 26 letters happened to be peculiarly adaptable to mechanical printing" (2001: 55). Although there is no direct evidence, historians are aware that the links between East and West were extensive enough for the early Chinese idea of printing to have diffused across to Europe. But there is no evidence that the invention of metal type spread from Korea all the way to Germany in less than fifty years to be copied by Gutenberg. John Man, in his book, *The Gutenberg Revolution* (2002), emphasizes as well the absence of other elements in Eastern cultures that could favor the invention of a Gutenberg-style press:

> Chinese paper was suitable only for calligraphy or block-printing; there were no screw-based presses in the east, because they were not wine-drinkers, didn't have olives, and used other means to dry their paper (115).

He also observes that, while in Korea more than a hundred books were printed during the thirty-two-year reign of the emperor Sejong who assumed the throne two decades after the metal-type press was invented in 1403, and who decided to devise a script more suitable to printing, there followed no revolution, "because Korea's elite were appalled at the idea of losing Chinese, the badge of their elitism" (112–15).

In Europe, by contrast, there was an explosion of books printed by movable type the moment Gutenberg published the first printed book, the Bible in 1452–55. "Within the next half century," Landes observes, "printing spread from the Rhineland throughout Western Europe. The estimated output of incunabula (books published before 1501) came to millions: 2 million in Italy alone" (1998: 52). Hobson counters Landes's argument that printing never "exploded" in China as it did in Europe by arguing that "by the end of the fifteenth century, China probably published more books than all other countries combined" (184). This is misleading; the issue under debate is the printing revolution: China

did not *print* more books.[8] By 1480, twelve years after Gutenberg's death, there were fifty *printing* towns in Italy, thirty in Germany, nine in France, eight in Spain, five in Belgium and Switzerland, and four in England. By 1500, Europe's presses had printed eight million books (Eisenstein 1993: 13–17). Just between 1518 and 1520, the thirty tracts or so Luther wrote were distributed in 300,000 printed copies. By the middle of the sixteenth century, the Venetian presses had produced some 20,000 titles, including maps, musical scores, medical manuals, and a flood of new secular learning. Movable type and cheap paper made this flood of books and pamphlets possible, but without a growing literate audience thirsting for knowledge – between 1300 and 1500 the number of universities in Europe increased from twenty to seventy – the invention of printing would not have been a *revolution*.[9]

[8] What makes this claim all the more puzzling is Hobson's reliance on Donald F. Lach and Edwin J. Van Kley's work, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, III (1993), as if it were a work depicting a backward Europe borrowing much from Asia. I should clarify that the first two volumes of *Asia in the Making of Europe*, each consisting of two and three books respectively, were singularly authored by Lach and published in 1965. The third volume, consisting of four books, was co-authored, and published in 1993. This monumental work, it is true, has been celebrated as the "first comprehensive study of Asian influences on Western culture" and this explains why Frank (1998: 11) and Hobson (199) have embraced it as their own. But the central theme of these books, as Lach writes in the introduction to the first book of the first volume, is the way "the newer and more dynamic civilizations of the West" set out to learn about "the great civilizations of Asia [which] were more advanced than their own." This willingness to learn from other cultures was shown by the hundreds of books printed and translated after 1550 by European missionaries, merchants, sea captains, physicians, sailors, soldiers, and other travellers, starting with the Jesuit presses "which were established in many European towns and a few mission centers in Asia." The "influence of Asia on the development of the West" is not a sign of stagnation and backwardness but an expression of cultural dynamism; "while Europeans dispatched trading, diplomatic, and religious missions to Asia, Asian countries never sent similar missions to Europe on their own initiative" (Lach 1965: xi–xx).

[9] The printing revolution was preceded by prior cumulative changes in the production of books. Between the 4th and 7th century, the scroll was replaced by the *codex*, which "revolutionized" reading by introducing pages to manuscripts. In the thirteenth century, new techniques of writing were introduced; punctuation was improved, titles and subtitles were added to manuscripts, books were divided into chapters, and indices of the contents were organized in alphabetical order. Reading aloud was replaced by silent, private reading. Bookshops appeared; parchment-makers, copyists, and bookbinders grew to meet the expansion of schools and universities and the growth of vernacular languages. This century also witnessed a new system for reproducing texts known as the *exemplar*, which allowed several copyists to work on the same text simultaneously. New categories of non-religious readers also emerged – not just teachers and students but ordinary lay people, including women for whom a type of devotional book was designed. In the fifteenth century, paper came into general use (Le Goff 2005: 126–27). Meanwhile, printing had no impact on the Islamic world

The Science and Chivalry of Henry the Navigator

The operative principle in the rise of Europe is the generation of a continuing, self-sustaining process of cultural change. This process has been underestimated, which is not surprising considering that most scholars who have dedicated themselves to this theme, including Eurocentrics, are economic historians – Jones, North, Pomeranz, Frank, Mokyr, Wong, Cipolla, O'Brien – all deeply influenced by the unmistakable fact that the outbursts of economic growth Europe saw before the Industrial Revolution eventually ran against limited food supplies and fertile farmland. Cultures and institutions, in the minds of these historians, are either facilitators or enablers of economic growth.[10] Thus, when Mokyr draws attention to Newtonian science as a body of knowledge, it is to show how it enabled the inventions of the eighteenth century, and how these inventions in turn enabled the self-sustaining growth rates of the nineteenth century. The truth is that Europe's creativity persisted right through the ups and downs of Malthusian cycles. The beginnings of what J. H. Parry (1964) has described as the "Age of Reconnaissance" occurred exactly between the middle of the 14th and the middle of the 15th centuries when most of Europe experienced a massive Malthusian collapse, stagnation, famines, and epidemics. What is most intriguing, indeed, is that a small corner of Europe, Portugal, was the kingdom which took the lead in maritime explorations.

Following Temple, Hobson contends that the Chinese, as late as 1800, had ships and sailing techniques far in advance of Europeans. Even if we were to accept this dubious claim, the explanation for European pre-eminence in exploration is not that the methods of navigation in 15th century-Europe were already superior to the methods used by the Chinese or the Arabs. Scholars have long been impressed by the series of expeditions organized by Cheng Ho between 1405 and 1433. Landes describes the ships used in these expeditions as "probably the largest vessels the world had seen…each carrying hundreds of

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until the 19th century, despite the fact that Muslims had paper, ink, even wine presses, and an alphabetical (Arabic) script.

[10] Landes is unusual among economic historians in that he views culture as more than a mere constraint or a facilitator of growth. But as we shall see in the next chapter, his focus is still over the question why Europe was the first civilization to invent "the very notion of economic development" (1998: 32). He does not evaluate European cultural history for its creativity or for its ethical and aesthetic ends.

sailors and soldiers, testimony to the advanced techniques of Chinese shipbuilding, navigation, and naval organization" (94). The questions are: Why were the voyages of Chen Ho discontinued? Why did the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) prohibit all trade overseas? Why did the Chinese not venture beyond the Mozambique Channel around the Cape into the Atlantic? Why did Portugal seek out Asia, not China Europe?

Some have said this is an illicit set of questions judging Chinese exploration by European standards. China was simply more advanced and did not need to visit backward Europe. This is just the point: the motives that drove both civilizations to the oceans were dramatically different. The trips by Cheng Ho were not primarily for exploration or even trade. This much is stated by Landes where he states:

> Why did China not make that little extra effort that would have taken it around the southern end of Africa and up into the Atlantic? […] They [Chinese] went to show themselves, not to see and learn; to bestow their presence, not to stay; to receive obeisance and tribute, not to buy. They were what they were and did not have to change. They had what they had and did not have to take or make. Unlike the Europeans, they were not motivated by greed and passion. The Europeans had a specific target: the wealth of the Indies. They had to get around Africa; that was the point of the exercise. The Chinese did not have to. They could find what they wanted in the Indian Ocean, and what they wanted was so trivial that it was not an appetizer but a dessert (1998: 96).[11]

The contrast with Portuguese exploration could not be more marked. It is no argument at all to point out that Europe was not at the pinnacle of the world in terms of shipping and navigational techniques at the end of the 15th century. One only need look at Portugal, the very region that took the lead in the discovery of Asia. It lacked just about everything one would expect in a nation about to embark in the exploration of the world. This little country, at the beginning of the 15th century, had fewer than one million people, possessed only few maritime resources and equipment, had relatively little experience in long-distance trade, few commercial contacts, and little capital for

[11] Cardwell also endorses a cardinal principle of Eurocentrism: "The remarkable number of inventions that originated in China is proof enough of the genius of the Chinese people. And yet for centuries China refused to accept ideas or inventions from outside, with the result that Chinese techniques eventually languished…A willingness to imitate, or adopt, inventions made by foreigners is the first step towards the creation of an inventive and technically progressive society" (2001: 32).

investment. It was also short of productive land, barely self-sufficient in cereals, and without sufficient timber resources to support big ocean-going ships. Nor did it have large urban areas with a literate bourgeoisie, only small towns and small manufactures confined to local markets. While Portugal was well placed, in a geographical sense, between north Atlantic Europe and the Mediterranean world, it had few navigable rivers and a coast that was low, sandy and windswept, or rocky and abrupt (Parry 1974: 87–102).

What, then, drove Portuguese seamen into the Indian Ocean?

Hobson's argument is that whatever commercial success the Portuguese may have enjoyed in the Indian Ocean was mostly due to "luck and deviousness…given their military weakness." Hobson claims the following: "As Chaudhuri argues, there was no reason for the Asian powers to balance against the Portuguese because the latter were not considered a military threat" (147). The book Hobson uses – K.N. Chaudhuri's *Trade and Civilization in the Indian Ocean* (1985) – embraces, in fact, the opposite thesis: the Portuguese initiated a new system of military oceanic navigation which was followed by the Dutch and English "bureaucratic form of trade" that "quickened the pace of seaborne trade" and "delivered a mortal blow not only to Muslim supremacy in the western Indian Ocean but also to the introspectiveness of India and China" (9). Chaudhuri does question easy generalizations portraying the Portuguese as masters of the Indian Ocean throughout the 16th century. He is, nevertheless, quite impressed by what the Portuguese did from 1500 to about 1560; specifically, how they were able to exercise military power, achieve profitable commercial links, and quasi-political rule over the whole of the western coast of India "all the way down to Ceylon, up the coast of Coromandel, across the Bay of Bengal to the strait of Malacca and the South China Sea," including an annual commercial voyage from Gao to Macau and Nagasaki.[12] He too asks "how it was possible for a small and relatively obscure nation facing the Atlantic and outside the brilliant economic mainstream of the central Mediterranean to achieve this status" (1985: 71–80). To this he answers that it was the result of a "consciously adopted" policy to achieve a military reputation in the use of better

[12] Jeremy Black writes similarly about Portugal's "great initial impact" but subsequent "serious challenges" in the second half of the sixteenth century, from the Ottomans, Asians, and decisively from the Dutch and the English (2000: 35–7).

seamanship and the use of artillery by a nation otherwise weak in economic resources and manpower (147).[13]

Starting around 1419 when Prince Henry established a sort of institute for advanced study at the southern tip of Portugal, Cape St. Vincent, to which he brought astronomers, shipbuilders, instrument makers, cartographers, and navigators of different nationalities, the Portuguese became the first world historical example of a program of discovery. Many technical solutions and improvements – in the measurement of latitude, the charting of the African coast, the collection of charts on new map projections, the differentiation of types of ships for different tasks – were introduced under the leadership of the Portuguese as they patiently sent out expeditions almost annually through the 15th century down the tortuous west coast of Africa, until the way was paved for Vasco da Gama to cross into the Indian Ocean. Whenever the Portuguese set out on an expedition they carried charts with a latitude grid, and the maps which Da Gama used "contained no error in the African coastline of as much as two degrees." At first the Portuguese relied on Ptolemaic maps, which indicated that it might be possible to sail directly from east Africa across the Indian Ocean, but also mistakenly assumed that southern Africa was joined to some *Terra Incognita*. Eventually, however, they created the first accurate maps of west Africa as far as Sierra Leone, and then relied on Fra Mauro's maps, one of which (1457) mapped the totality of the Old World with unmatched accuracy while also suggesting, for the

[13] It is interesting to observe Wallerstein's own version of the Portuguese voyages in the first volume of his *World-System*, published over thirty years ago when Marxists were not under the tutelage of multicultural correctness: "Vasco de Gama came, saw, and conquered far more and far faster than Julius Caesar. It is indeed extraordinary that, in a very few years, Portuguese ships completely dominated the extensive trade of the Indian Ocean" (1974: 326). This was, however, "only a naval superiority" (330). The Portuguese "arrived and found a flourishing world-system;" they did not create this system; "the social organization of the economy [in Asian lands] as well as the political superstructures remained largely untouched"(331). Essentially, Portuguese ships dominated as far as the military dimensions of trade were concerned. The military advantage, moreover, was restricted to the seas; the Portuguese did not control any of the hinterlands of Asia. The sources Wallerstein relied on are well-known ones, which today are classified as "Eurocentric." My point is that historians, including Wallerstein, have long recognized that the achievements of the Portuguese did not include the subordination of the Asian economy to a dominant European world-economy, or to a dominant military capacity in the hinterlands. Carlo Cipolla is quoted by Wallerstein as observing that "the Europeans' effective conquest or control of vast hinterlands came later as one of the by products of the Industrial Revolution" (332).

first time in world geography, a navigable route around the southern tip of Africa.[14]

It would be an oversimplification, however, to emphasize only the scientific dimensions of the Portuguese undertaking. These explorers were not scientists travelling to annual conferences. A contemporary of Henry, Azurara (sometimes spelled as "Zurara") believed that Henry was driven by a number of motivations: the desire to find markets, seek allies to wage battles against the enemies of Christianity, extend the religion of Christianity, and discover the lands beneath Cape Bojador. Here I would point to the contribution of Peter Russell, who questions the claim that Henry was *only* a "harbinger of humanism or a pioneer of modern science," (1995) and calls attention to the *medieval* (not modern) crusading or missionary mindset of Henry.

On the surface, Armesto appears to be making a similar argument when he states that "chivalry was more important than humanism [scientific curiosity] in stimulating overseas exploration" (2007: 516). The difference is that Armesto brings up the idea of chivalry only to trivialize the entire Portuguese effort. He dislikes the very idea of a "chivalrous hero," speaks of heroic feats as "fictions" embraced by "violent criminals." Henry "imagined himself a romantic hero, destined to perform great deeds…The truth is that he never went exploring" (517–8).

Armesto backs his claims referencing Russell's work. Russell (1995) does question the notion that Henry was guided by a "single-minded" scientific interest in exploration, but he does not see him as a violent character inhabiting a world of romantic fictions. He writes of the careful planning and diligent use of resources by the Portuguese at the same time that he portrays Henry as someone determined to live up to the chivalric military ideals of his noble class at the service of the Christian

[14] The deliberateness of what the Portuguese were doing has been long attested: Consider the early McNeill: "The most striking application of the new techniques of scientific navigation was the route chosen by Vasco da Gama for his voyage to India in 1497. He sailed far out into the Atlantic before turning east at the appropriate latitude and steering for the Cape of Good Hope, which had been discovered by Bartholomew Diaz only eleven years before…Da Gama's fleet was out of sight of land for 96 days and traveled about 4,500 miles between landfalls – a vastly greater voyage than Columbus' 2,600 miles in 36 days without sight of land. Moreover, Da Gama reached the coast of Africa within about 130 miles of the Cape for which he had steered – a remarkably precise feat of navigation considering the difficulty of taking sights of the sun on pitching ship with the primitive instruments of the time" (1963: 570). See also Daniel Boorstein (1983) for a vivid narrative portraying the Portuguese achievement as a step-by-step progression, "a grand proto-type of modern exploration" (157).

doctrine of the crusade. He also does not see any "contradiction between the Prince's crusading interests and his search for gold" (1995: 121).

The pursuit of personal renown through heroic deeds – as I shall elaborate on in later chapters – was a uniquely Western strain with deep roots in the aristocratic warlike culture of Indo-European speakers. Russell is correct in stating that Henry's chivalric spirit gave him the "moral strength and the single-mindedness which made it possible for him to carry through the great enterprises of discovery associated with his name" (1995: 128). Henry's contemporaries had always known this, that Henry was a man driven by a crusading and missionary spirit emboldened by chivalric honor.

Those who explain the European age of discovery in economic-functionalist terms miss both the Portuguese rational method of exploration and the Western spirit of chivalric-individual strive.[15] No one

[15] It is worth citing Wallerstein again as an illustration of what I referred to in the first chapter as a view of humans as "passive" or "reactive" creatures whose motivations are mere expressions of the needs of a world system. Wallerstein argues that the Portuguese were the ones who took the "lead" in establishing a "capitalist world-economy". He says the Portuguese were able to benefit from a system of "unequal exchange" which – alongside the Americas – was critical to the subsequent empowerment of Europe over Asia. Tiny Portugal is described as the "initial center" of the "first thrust" in the creation of a modern world economy (1974: 38–39). The European feudal system was facing a crisis since about the mid-13th century, and the territorial expansion overseas was the means by which Portugal set out to handle this crisis. The European economy "needed" food, resources, and new outlets of employment for young men; the incomes of the nobility were declining, but while the European nobilities were involved in the Iberian explorations, it was Portugal which had "no choice" but to initiate a solution to this crisis, for it was located on the "Atlantic, right next to Africa" (49). The Portuguese were also the more advanced capitalists in Europe; they had "much experience with long-distance trade;" "her economy was relatively more monetized, her population relatively more urbanized," coupled with the fact that she had no land for internal colonization, while at the same time she had a relatively unified "core" state capable of supporting oceanic expansion. While China still had room for internal expansion within her frontiers, Europe "needed" to expand overseas; and Portugal was the most developed nation in Europe ready to carry out a type of commercial-military expansion that would initiate the creation of a world-wide division of labor and would thus initiate Europe's global ascendency (49–63). Much as Wallerstein cautions his readers that Europe "must not be reified" (51), this is exactly what he does, artificially forcing backward Portugal to play the role of a powerful, highly commercialized state, even though, at the time, Portugal was possibly one of the most undeveloped states in the world. I believe that the Portuguese expansion was a continuation of the "aristocratic" expansionism Robert Barlett (1993) saw in the period 950–1350, with the difference that the Portuguese took to the seas because they were a small territorial power unable to impose their will on the continent, but with considerable experience in navigation. The feudal system did not "need" anything; Henry was thirsty for resources and commercial profits as much as for aristocratic honor and glory. I will refer again to Barlett.

denies the costs and benefits associated with the explorations, the motivation for gold, slaves, and trade. But we should not forget that even seemingly economic actions partake of non-materialistic motivations – as Adam Smith well realized, calling "vanity" not the pursuit of wealth per se but the pursuit of wealth for the sake of gaining adulation from others. Yet there was more to European conquerors and explorers than the pursuit of adulation by way of riches. The leading men wanted to be renowned for their feats and achievements *even if it entailed economic costs, persistent hardships, and early death*.[16]

I will try to explain in chapter six why Europeans exhibited a peculiar restlessness which was manifested not only in their zeal for exploration and in their crusading tradition, but in all spheres of life. There is no doubt that China had imperial interests of its own and that it engaged in expansionary ventures that resulted in the acquisition of windfall resources from the land colonization of vast tracks of land in Asia. But China did not exhibit the same zest for exploration and overseas power. The Portuguese advanced into the Indian Ocean with ruthless determination, daring and pugnacity. The Chinese came with a live-and-let-live attitude, uninterested in converting heathens, uninterested in acquiring special access to other countries' staples, and indifferent to chivalric deeds. Instead, the expeditions of Admiral Cheng-ho were intended to display China's power and to extend her tributary relationships. The tributary system involved an exchange of gifts wherein China's benign cultural superiority over her neighbours was asserted. There was no effort towards creating a maritime empire, establishing new bases for trade, and expanding militarily. Cheng-ho was, evidently, a man of talent, but he was not an adventurer, an entrepreneur, or a conqueror. He was, let us be clear, a eunuch. There were thousands of eunuchs in the Ming imperial household; that is, men who were castrated when they were young in order to keep them in a docile state, as trusted counterweights to the ambitions of the meritocratic Confucian elite.[17]

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[16] Findley and O'Rourke (2007), in their up-to-date summary of the Portuguese voyages, emphasize the "inextricable mixture of religious zeal, geo-political grand strategy and commercial profit" (145), as well as the "feudal ethos" of the *fidalgo* class (156). Their focus however is almost entirely on the economic aspects. It should be clear by the end of this book that the crusading missionary zeal and the chivalric-feudal ethos of the Portuguese, as well as the British creation of a naval empire, were rationalized variants of a pan-European aristocratic restlessness.

[17] For a medical study of the eunuchs of Chinese and Ottoman courts and the long term consequences of the inhumane practice of castration in men, see Wilson and Roehrborn (1999).

Columbus and the Cartographic Revolution

Armesto's statement in *Millennium* (1995: 172) that the 15th century European expansion was "no outpouring of pent-up dynamism [but] was launched from…a contracting civilization…[that] will appear [to future non-Eurocentric historians] as stagnant and introspective" is completely out of sync with what Portugal did throughout that century and what happened right after Columbus sighted in October 1492 the islands now known as the West Indies. Leave out the exploration of the Indian Ocean: In 1497 John Cabot secured the support of Bristol merchants for a voyage on which he discovered Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. Between May 1499 and June 1500, Amerigo Vespucci navigated up to the coast of Guyana, and then on May 1501 sailed again from Lisbon to Brazil. By the 1520s the Spanish and other navigators had explored the entire eastern coast of the two Americas from Labrador to Rio de la Plata. From 1519 to 1522 Ferdinand Magellan, a Portuguese, led the first successful attempt to circumnavigate the earth through the unimagined vastness of the Pacific Ocean.[18] Between 1519 and 1521 Fernando Cortez consciously put himself at the command of an expedition that would result in the conquest of the Aztec Empire. Between 1524 and 1528 Francisco Pizarro ventured twice down the cost of Colombia and Ecuador, during which time he heard reports of an Indian empire comparable with that of the Aztecs. By January 1531 he was ready to embark, with less than 200 men and 37 horses, for Peru. Meanwhile, during the 1530s and early 1540s the Frenchman Jacques Cartier led three ambitious trips that resulted in the exploration of the St. Lawrence River as far as Quebec and Montreal, discovering the main artery into North America from the Atlantic eastern coasts.

Hobson (like Fernandez-Armesto) trivializes the landing of Columbus in the Americas as an accidental failure led by a man who really intended to discover China and to his dying days refused to accept this failure, coming up "with all manner of bogus geographical justifications (all of which were framed within orthodox Christian conceptions of geography) to prove that he had in fact discovered Asia" (164). It is

[18] Although Magellan was killed and did not complete the entire voyage, of the 237 men who set out on the expedition 18 completed it to return to Spain in 1522. Whitfield writes: "Magellan's energy and vision equalled that of Columbus, and he shared with his great predecessor the tenacity of a man driven by something deeper than common ambition" (1998: 93). This tenacity is a characteristic of Europe's great individuals; rarely to be found elsewhere.

true that Columbus's voyages, unlike Da Gama's, were not the culmination of decades of organized exploration and co-operation between pilots at sea and experts at headquarters. Columbus's geographical reasoning, as Parry points out, "was based not on intelligence reports, but on a combination of travel literature, cosmographical theory and inner conviction" (Parry 1974: 194). But already about 1500, Juan de la Cosa produced the first world map depicting the Columbian discoveries, showing the West Indies, Puerto Rico, and Jamaica. What is especially noteworthy was the way Cuba was drawn as an island, against Columbus's belief that Cuba was part of Cathay. In 1502, the so-called Cantino map, drawn for Alberto Cantino, illustrated with close accuracy the outlines of Africa, Madagascar, India, and Ceylon. Europeans were coming to realize that Columbus had in fact discovered "what may be called a New World," as Amerigo Vespucci wrote in a series of letters published in 1504 and 1506. The 1507 map of Martin Waldseemuller, a German cosmographer, depicted a coastline from Newfoundland to Argentina, and showed the two American continents clearly separated from Asia (Whitfield 1998: 53–71). The effects on cartography of Magellan's voyage around the globe were immediate and encouraged the making of maps containing the whole scope of the Earth and its places between the polar circles in both latitude and longitude (Wilford 2000: 66–8). The details are abundant; suffice it to say that, by 1569 the Flemish cartographer, Gerard Mercator, solved the extremely difficult problem of converting the three-dimensional globe into a two-dimensional map, or projecting figures from a sphere onto a flat sheet.[19]

A world in which vast tracts of land had remained unknown and inaccessible for thousands of years was opened up by a veritable revolution in geographical discoveries and in map-making. The Egyptians, the Maya, and the Chinese were relatively restricted to their homeland and immediate surroundings in their movements. The Chinese ventured momentarily into the Indian Ocean, but even after European

[19] "Cartography in the sixteenth century became, indeed, almost a craze," writes John Hale (1994: 16). The 1595 edition of Mercator's *Atlas* included 107 maps, of which 102 described regions within Europe; he was planning to offer detailed maps of the other continents but was thwarted by his death at 82. His world map of 1569 was the product of decades of harmonizing a vast number of sources and travel narratives into a single geographic picture of the planet, the Antarctic landmass included. For a colorful biography that brings out the extraordinary intellectual landscape from which Mercator worked out his ideas, see Nicholas Crane's *Mercator, The Man who Mapped the Planet* (Phoenix: 2003).

ships had sailed into the harbors of the Atlantic, the Pacific, and the Indian Oceans, "no Indian or Chinese ship was ever seen in Seville, Amsterdam or London" (Whitfield: 2). The Polynesians navigated across millions of square miles of the Pacific, but as gifted as they were in practical and experiential matters, they never cultivated a body of geographical knowledge. The Phoenicians sailed and colonized various sites in the Western Mediterranean before 1000BC, but they left no geographical documents.

It was the ancient Greeks who started a tradition of translating geographical experience into a body of objective knowledge. Peter Whitfield's *New Found Lands: Maps in the History of Exploration (*1998) tells us that the Greeks thought-out three of the most critical questions a geographical science requires: i) the form and magnitude of the earth, ii) the shape and size of its land masses and oceans, and iii) the nature and extent of human habituation on the earth. This scientific geography began with Hecataeus, author of *Journey Round the World*, born in the Ionian Greek colonies along the coast of Asia Minor, the cradle of the sixth century Pre-Socratic revolution in the rational study of nature. The *Journey* was based on Hecataeus's exploratory travels along the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, combined with countless news and rumors he had heard from a long generation of Greeks who had been establishing colonies along these two seas in contact with the worlds of Scythia and India. These sources were undoubtedly imperfect but amply adequate for him to envision the world as a disc surrounded by an ocean, with the Celts placed in the west, the Scythians in the north shores of the Black Sea, Libya in the south, and the Indus in the east.

The next geographer was Herodotus, born in 484BC, the author of the classic *Histories*, which narrated the momentous struggle between the Persians and the Greeks, but also offered numerous geographical and ethnographic insights based on his expeditions down the Nile, eastwards through Syria to Babylon and Susa, and north to the world of the Scythians and Thracians, including an expedition to Italy. Herodotus, in apparent criticism of his predecessor, wrote:

> For my part I cannot but laugh when I see numbers of persons drawing maps of the world without having any reason to guide them, making, as they do, the Ocean-stream to run all around the earth, and the earth itself to be an exact circle as if described by a pair of compasses (Cunliffe 2008: 5)

Another worldly personality and founder of geography was Pytheas, born in the Greek colony of Massalia (Marseilles), he was the first to

undertake an ambitious journey upwards through the Atlantic into the North Sea and, in so doing, provide direct information on the whole shape of Europe. In his book, *On the Ocean*, which no longer survives but is known from quoted fragments, Pytheas recounts a journey northwards to Brittany across the Channel into Cornwall, through the Irish, the Baltic, the coast of Norway, and even Iceland ("Thule") around 320/300BC, as recounted later by Strabo (Cunliffe: 8; Whitfield: 6–7).

This uniquely global, cosmopolitan vision would continue through the next centuries, during the Hellenistic era, with Eratosthenes (276–185BC), who not only conceptualized the shape of Europe in relation to the Atlantic and the North Sea, but also calculated the spherical size of the earth (within 5 percent of its true measure), leading to the obvious conclusion that the Mediterranean was only a small portion of the globe, and that most of the world was still unknown to the Greeks. This spirit of exploration combined with scientific curiosity was manifested even during Alexander's invasion of Persia, as he took scholars and geographers to record his journey and establish the location of the eastern ocean, which was imagined to mark the end of the Eurasian landmass. This progression continued in the second century AD, in the Hellenistic city of Alexandria, when Ptolemy wrote his *System of Astronomy* and his *Geography*, where he carefully explained the principles and methods required in mapmaking. He is best known for producing the first world map, *Universalis tabula;* one which extended far beyond the Greek-Roman lands, with a horizon that included India, China, South-East Asia, the British Isles, Denmark, and East Africa below the Horn of Africa. The inclusive multicultural dimension of this map was unequalled by any other civilization until the Europeans themselves began their explorations in the 15th century.

There was far less desire to explore the geographical contours and landscapes of the world among the cultures of the rest of the world. While in the 1st century BC the Han dynasty extended its geographical boundaries south into Vietnam, north into Korea, and east into the Tarim Basin, the Chinese showed little geographical interest in the world beyond its own borders. Goldstone asserts (with little explication) that Chinese medieval cartography reached incredible levels of sophistication (2000: 501–508). Temple (1999) makes a similar, if more detailed argument, in his *Genius of China*, in a section on "quantitative cartography." Yet, what is striking about Temple's examples of Chinese maps – intended, no doubt, to impress the reader – is how insular Chu

Ssu-Pen's maps of 1311 and 1320 AD were by comparison with the much earlier maps of Ptolemy (120–170AD). Temple writes that Chinese map-making was superior to anything seen in Europe before the fifteenth century, and may have a point as far as the ability of Chinese geographers to apply grids to maps to determine the positions and distances of local places. Yet, it is worth noting that, according to Temple's words, "so many early maps did not survive; they were not copied, and were frequently destroyed" (30–33). Maps were essentially secret information available only to a select few individuals. Of two maps that survived, Temple praises one of them for its coastal details and its inclusion of the Shantung peninsula. Of the other one, he writes that it "incorporates much more accurate information about the south-western rivers"; both however "display a regional bias" (33). Even a 16th century reproduction of Zheng He's sailing maps, printed in Louise Levathes's *The Treasure Fleet of the Dragon Throne*, *1405–1433* (1994), lacks any apposite scale, size, and sense of proportion regarding the major landmasses of the earth. There is reason to believe that, as late as the seventeenth century, Chinese astronomers, gifted as they were, continued to think in flat-earth terms (Huff 1993: 313).

Indian civilization showed less urge to explore the geography of the world; its maps were symbolic and removed from any empirical concern with the actual location of places. By contrast, Ptolemy relied on every source of travel and geography available at the time, as testified by a world gazetteer he put together which included over 8 thousand place-names, from Scotland to Malaya, in which he estimated (as accurate as was possible from his sources) the geographical coordinates of these places. It was on the strength of Ptolemy that Islam fostered its own geographical tradition with the benefit of their extensive dominions and travels. The greatest Islamic cartographer was al-Idrisi; he produced in 1154 AD a large planispheric silver relief map which incorporated the science of Ptolemy as well as information from Arabic travelers. This map was quite original in not portraying the Indian Ocean in a land-locked way, and offering a more precise knowledge of China's eastern coast. But Islamic geography would go no further (Sabra 1997: 182, 198; Whitfield: 14–16). In early modern Europe there was a continuous feedback relationship between exploration and mapmaking: a mere two years after Diaz had sailed around the Cape; Henricus Martellus created his World Map of 1490. This map showed both the whole of Africa generally and the specific locations (with assigned names) of numerous places across the entire African west

coast, detailing the step-by-step advancement of the Portuguese (Edson 2007: 215–16).

Whitfield poses the question concerning why Western culture has long exhibited a geographical dynamic both in its exploratory ventures and its mapping. He offers no definitive answer except to say that "the crucial motive for exploration was missing" outside Europe. He adds that this motive involves "a distinct sense of the known and the unknown, and the challenge of bridging those two realms" (1998: 2, 21).

The West, I believe, has always embodied a reflective sense of self-doubt about what it knows and what remains to be known, a kind of restlessness that has been both destructive and productive of new literary styles, musical trends, visual motifs, and novel ideas. By contrast, the intellectual and artistic order of China has remained relatively stable throughout its history. Historians have certainly come a long way since Turgot postulated a Chinese culture which "became fixed too early […and] never advanced beyond mediocrity" (in Nisbet: 183). Standard histories have come to recognize, for example, that during Ming times (1368–1644) there were more schools in villages and towns than ever before, that academies preparing candidates for the civil examination multiplied, bookstores abounded, and literacy outpaced population growth. It is undeniable, however, that creativity tended to occur within the original traditions of Confucianism, Taoism, legalism, and Buddhism, which, by absorbing new energies, did indeed continue to evolve, but "without any fundamental modification other than its refinement and more detailed articulation" (Mote 1993: 14).

Jacques Gernet, in his authoritative survey, *A History of Chinese Civilization* (originally published in French in 1972), bends over backwards trying to show that Chinese cultural life between 1650 and 1800 was not characterized by "conformism" but by "an openness of mind and intellectual curiosity." He says that "painting continued to show a remarkable vitality and originality," and that many academies set up under the Ming "had become centers of free discussion." He also offers short biographies of many noteworthy scholars; and yet one finds them always preoccupied with the Classics, commenting on them, debating, challenging, or re-evaluating past interpretations of the Classics. China certainly cultivated a sophisticated school of textual criticism and philology (1990: 495–516).[20] Yet, one does not see, this late in Chinese

[20] Fairbank (1992) stresses how "heterodoxy was perpetually guarded against" by the "theocratic Chinese state".

history – in the time of Descartes, Spinoza, Hobbes, Kepler, Harvey, Huyghens, Pascal, Leibniz – what Thomas Kuhn (1962) saw in Europe in his account of the development of scientific knowledge: "fundamental novelties" which stubbornly refuse to be accommodated within the established framework of understanding, "tradition-shattering" ideas which give rise to new conceptual frameworks and new methods of pursuing knowledge.

The Industrial Enlightenment

One of the oddest claims of Hobson and the revisionists is that it was really after about 1830–1850 that England began to follow a new cultural trajectory that could be contrasted to that of the East. Before that date, both England and China were still pre-industrial economies following a similar path of diminishing returns and rising prices. Goldstone in particular has endorsed this claim. He is unwilling to recognize any take-off into sustained growth in eighteenth century England, or, conversely, any industrial growth that could not be found in Qing China. If anything, he thinks that Qing China's "efflorescence" was more impressive. He writes of the "unprecedented" gain of nearly 200 million people between 1700 and 1800 supported by increases in land and labor productivity. He says that this was an "extraordinary achievement," which should no longer be neglected, in the way Perkins, Maddison, Huang, and Bray had done when they unceremoniously argued that Qing China "merely" experienced "extensive" or "involutionary" growth.

This effort to overplay the novelties of Qing China has come with an effort to downplay the growth rates of England. Revisionists have drawn on the quantitative findings of so-called "new" economic historians. The estimated GDP growth rates for the industrial sector were once believed to have been 4.4% per annum for the period 1800–1830 (Deane and Cole 1967). In the last decades, however, this growth rate was revised downward to 3% (Crafts (1985) or to 3.2% (Harley 1982). The total factor productivity growth was revised downward even more for the early 19th century, from well over 1% per annum to roughly 0.5% (Findlay and O'Rourke 2007: 313). New economic historians were thus tempted to argue that the Industrial Revolution was not a sudden phenomenon; that its origins and effects were extended over a period of time period longer than was previously believed. The Industrial Revolution was limited initially to a small proportion of the

aggregate economy. There is no denying, however, that key sectors associated with the new inventions, metallurgy and textiles, did experience fast rates of growth from the beginning: between 1770 and 1815, the iron industry grew at 3% per annum, and the cotton industry at 7% (Findley and O'Rourke: 313).

The debate on the origins of industrialization cannot be reduced to when England started to experience *nationwide* changes in productivity, or when the *rapid succession of* innovations, which began in the early 1700s, were translated into uninterrupted growth *throughout* the economy.[21] It is quite a stretch to turn an argument which slows the spread of the British industrial revolution into an argument for similar "macroeconomic patterns" between England and Qing China. There was "a break in the trend of growth around 1760–70" (Landes 1998: 193–94) in those sectors which first saw the introduction of the new inventions. Moreover, while this breakthrough began in England, there were many regions in Europe, such as Alsace, Bohemia, Flanders, Hamburg, Lombardy, North of France, Saxony, Silesia, and the Zurich highlands, which were decidedly moving in a similar direction (Komlos 2000).

The comparison here is not of two economic *periods* in the history of Britain (say, before 1830 and after 1830) but rather a comparison of *trends* in England with *trends* in Qing China. In terms of that comparison it is misleading to describe the economy of Britain before 1830 as "traditional" and "similar" to China's. The industrial revolution marked the dawn of a new era in the economic history of humanity when living standards would no longer collapse, despite sustained population growth.

It is the case, furthermore, that the sources of the inventions and innovations that made possible the beginning of this new era go back to the scientific culture and the institutional changes of the Enlightenment. It is also the case, as Mokyr argues, that Britain was not alone in the cultivation of this culture: "while Britain pulled ahead of the rest

[21] Peter Jay (2001: 221–23) offers a neat list of the successive inventions: Savery's steam pump (1698), Tull's mechanical (seed) sower (1708), Darby's coke for iron smelting (1709), Newcomen's atmospheric steam engine (1712), Astbury's salt-glaze earthen ware, substitute for porcelain (1720), Kay's flying shuttle (1735), Hunstman's crucible technique for casting steel (1740), Paul's carding machine (1742), Smeaton's breast water-wheel (1750s), and water-powered blowing cylinders (1760s), Hargreaves's spinning jenny (1766), Watt's separate condenser (1768), Arkwright's water frame (1769), and improved carding machine (1775), Compton's spinning mule, Cort's wrought iron (1784), Cartwright's power loom (1787), and more at an accelerated pace – not to mention the growing successive inventions by the French after the 1780s.

of Europe for a while between 1760 and 1820, its technology relied heavily on epistemic bases developed elsewhere in Europe, especially in France, but also in Germany, Scandinavia and Italy" (2001).[22] The science of mechanics was a necessary precondition to the development of working steam machines. There was a positive feedback relation running from scientific understanding to technological improvements in the development, for example, of Newcomen's engine. The theoretical-technological elements that made possible Watt's solution to the problem of rotary motion – the principles underlying the suction pump, the nature of a vacuum, the theory of atmospheric pressure, the first workable airtight cylinder and piston driven by atmospheric pressure, the understanding of the nature of steam and the realization that air and steam were different – were the joint achievement of Europeans (Mokyr 2003).[23]

Still, it is not enough, to show that Europe had the theoretical capability to invent new machines. I agree with Mokyr that *England forged ahead temporarily* due to the presence of a more practical culture that regarded the purpose of knowledge to be the improvement of life. Mokyr thus writes of an "industrial enlightenment" in England *before* the industrial revolution and *after* the scientific revolution. The science of mechanics of the seventeenth century and the "industrial enlightenment" *combined* widened the epistemic and institutional base of technology and made possible the "gradual stream of improvements" in techniques after 1750. Growth before 1750 occurred "in relatively brief

[22] "Why was the Industrial Revolution a European Phenomenon?" Paper Presented to the Conference on The Rule of Law, Freedom, and Prosperity, George Mason University, November 2001. This paper can be obtained from Mokyr's web page, which makes readily available many of his papers.

[23] Lipsey, Carlaw and Bekar (2002) write: "While no one can definitely demonstrate that a purely empirical approach, devoid of any science, could not have produced the steam engine, three things are clear. First, that is not what happened; the development of working steam machines and scientific understanding went hand in hand. Second, a purely empirical approach would have taken far longer. Third, if the steam engine had evolved solely through trial and error, it could not have reached the same level of efficiency or range of application than it did historically." But not only is there no evidence that Chinese craftsmen were creating through mere trial and error a machine-based factory economy, but if they had done so, "there is no way they could have gone on" to the "Science-Led Phase" (1880–1945) of the Second Industrial Revolution, characterized by steel, chemicals, internal combustion engines, and electric motors. Vries also makes the point that, while the connections between science and the first industrial revolution may be a matter of dispute, the "stream of innovations" that came through the entire nineteenth century, and after, "would have dried up" without modern science (2003: 57).

spurts" followed by "long periods of stagnation or mild decline," because the knowledge sustaining these episodes of growth were "narrow." The knowledge supporting the technology associated with pre-industrial expansion was "relatively small" and this made it too difficult and too costly to find solutions to problems in the operation, application, and improvement of existing techniques (2002: 18–19, 31).

To take the contribution of modern science first, it offered a deeper understanding of "why and how" particular techniques operated and why they worked. It provided the mechanical principles that explicated the underlying rules of the techniques and this facilitated further upgrading. Already during the seventeenth century we observe in Western Europe, and not just England, a growing appreciation for precision and standardization in measurement of instruments and equipment, a common and open method of verification and experimentation with a set of rules to test "which techniques worked best," including a conviction in the orderliness and predictability of nature, and a Baconian culture which promoted the accumulation of knowledge in order to make useful things to improve the material conditions of life.

However, Mokyr also cautions against "the notion that the scientific revolution led directly to the Industrial Revolution" (2002: 29–77). He has contributed to the debate the idea that the "Industrial Enlightenment" of the eighteenth century was the "missing link" which formed the "historical bridge" between the world of Galileo and the world of James Watt. This enlightenment involved the rise of numerous societies "dedicated to the diffusion of useful knowledge" and the creation of information networks between engineers, natural philosophers, and businessmen; the opening of artillery schools, mining schools, informal scientific societies, as well as numerous micro-inventions that turned insights into "successful business propositions." It also included "the emergence of experts, consulting engineers, accountants, and other professionals," standardization of information, scientific notation, improved standards for weights and measures, and specialist collections of technical and engineering data. Finally, it included a wide range of institutional changes that affected economic behavior, commercial relations, resource allocation, savings and investment.

Even as Mokyr agrees that economic growth "was very slow during the Industrial Revolution, and that living standards barely nudged upward until the mid-1840s" (2002: 83), he carefully distances himself from the claim that the divergence began suddenly in the 1830s.

Moreover, while the Industrial Revolution began in England because this island offered somewhat more incentives and opportunities, Mokyr offers abundant evidence showing that the Industrial Enlightenment was a "Western phenomenon" to the degree that it drew heavily from a European-wide scientific culture, and the degree to which continental Europe was not far behind in its applications.[24]

Goldstone's "Happy Chance" versus Jacob's Scientific Ethos

Mokyr's emphasis on England's initiation of this scientific-practical culture is a view also proposed by Goldstone, who otherwise places himself squarely within the revisionist school in his claim that the "great divergence" started in the first half of the nineteenth century. Goldstone writes that, "from 1650," England saw "the development and marriage of an investigative instrument-based experimental science to an entrepreneurial, machine and engineering-oriented practical culture." But for some unclear reason he still maintains that the period "from 1760 to 1830 was an era of pre-industrial growth," and that the industrial age "only" started "with the widespread deployment of steam engines in manufacturing and transportation … from the 1820s to 1850s" (2002b: 355–6). In his extended essay, "Efflorescences and Economic Growth in World History: Rethinking the 'Rise of the West' and the Industrial Revolution" (2002b), he repeats more than once that "it is only toward the mid-nineteenth century, with rail and mass utilization of coal and steam power…that 'modern' economic growth appears" (366).

What makes Goldstone different from Mokyr, despite their additional agreement that New World products and abundant deposits of coal in Britain were not, on their own, the specific factors that led to the great divergence, is essentially that Goldstone sees England's

[24] Mokyr sometimes pushes his argument too far, as when he writes that the Industrial Enlightenment is "the central question that holds the key to the modern economic history of the West" (2002: 43). He seems to think that Europe was stuck in a perennial world of tradition and backwardness before his industrial enlightenment came along, ignoring the fact that medieval Europe already had 70 universities, and that the Renaissance witnessed a revolution in printing with far-reaching implications, and that through the early modern era major advances had been accomplished in the design of ships, gunnery, cartography, clocks, telescopes, microscopes, thermometers, air pumps, and mathematics – with few parallels elsewhere. Maddison (2007: 319–20) criticizes Mokyr's pessimistic assumption that no net improvements in living standards occurred before 1800.

adoption of a engineering-oriented practical culture as a "happy chance" made possible by a series of unexpected political events associated with the Glorious Revolution of 1688. He contends that England's engine culture was able to flourish as a result of some "highly contingent circumstances" which led to the liberal revolution of 1688 and created a more open society, in contrast to the anti-Newtonian, pro-Cartesian Catholic "reaction," which swept much of continental Europe and kept it in a state of industrial backwardness (2002a). The "rather odd and unusual" engine culture of England was "by no means a necessary and inevitable outcome of a broader 'scientific' [European-wide] revolution" (2002b: 373). "Multiple" scientific renaissances and "modernities" were happening all around the globe in the post-1500 era; the Galilean breakthrough was one of similar scientific advances elsewhere (330, 334). For all her engine culture, England in the 1700s was "undergoing a similar macro-economic pattern as Qing China" (360). It was only after 1830 that England "managed to avoid such a [Malthusian] decline" and achieve self-sustaining growth.[25]

In developing his "happy chance," Goldstone draws from Jacob's carefully constructed work, *Scientific Culture and the Making of the Industrial West* (1997), which is an expanded version of her earlier book, *Cultural Meaning of the Scientific Revolution* (1988), both of which look at the *long-term* gestation of the scientific culture of Europe. Lest readers be misled, however, Jacob does not argue, in either one of these books, as Goldstone implies, that experimental physics and Newtonian science were "halted" in Continental Europe in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. She says that the *timing* of this engine culture varied from country to country in Western Europe, and that by the 1720s the Baconian ideal of applied mechanical knowledge was "more visible in Britain than anywhere else in the West." Absolutism and the power of the Catholic clergy over education in France and Belgium "inhibited" but did "not stop" the introduction of new machines for industrialization. Already by 1800 the mechanical culture England originated was well underway in most of northwestern Europe (1997: 106, 131–164).

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[25] In his brief, student-oriented book, *Why Europe?: The Rise of the West in World History, 1500–1850* (2008), Goldstone alters the dates somewhat: "Europe was far behind many of the advanced societies elsewhere in the world and did not catch up with and surpass the leading Asian societies until about AD 1800" (viii). This book typically avoids most of the counter-evidence put forward in the last years against the revisionist agenda.

Neither does Jacob portray modern European science as one more variant within a common tradition of "Eurasian natural inquiries," as Goldstone puts it. She writes that the "scientific legacy of Copernicus, Galileo, Descartes, and especially Boyle and Newton" – as popularized and cultivated within English society – "helped to make the concrete applications of [steam] power possible," and explicitly states that she wants "to debunk the myth about how important inventions in the early stages of industrial revolution had nothing to do [with the Scientific Revolution]" (7, 133).

The key figure of industrial Britain, she explains, was not a semiliterate tinkerer; it was men (and women) who "knew machines from having built them, or from having closely examined them, and knew that machines worked best when they took into account mechanical principles learned from basic theories in mechanics, hydrostatics, and dynamics" (109). Thus, she would not welcome Goldstone's suggestion that the engine culture of Britain could have been as easily adopted and integrated by other cultures in the world given another set of random circumstances.

Britain's engine culture was a mentality, an outlook on life brewing for a long time right across Europe. By the eighteenth century this ethos had spread and penetrated deep into British civil society, the schools and textbooks, the academies and journals, the coffee houses and printer's shops.[26] The advantage England enjoyed was in the earlier fusion of theoretical and applied-industrial science. This fusion found its highest expression in the minds of individuals like Henry Beighton (1636–1743), capable both of constructing the self-acting valve (1717) as well as writing about the performance of mine-drainage engines. In his article "A Physico-Mechanical Calculation of the Power of an Engine" (1717), Beighton provided "clear directions as to the quantities of water that could be pumped per stroke, per minute, and per hour, from various depths, according to the diameter of the engine cylinder, strokes per minute, and bore pump." It was similarly evident in the life of the ironmonger and tinkerer Thomas Newcomen, who, in 1712, succeeded in erecting his first atmospheric steam pump and wrote about "rules for calculating engine power, according to the

[26] Landes (1969: 63) writes of "the abundant facilities for technical education in 'villages' like Manchester during this period, ranging from Dissenters' academies and learned societies to local and visiting lecturers, 'mathematical and commercial' private schools with evening classes, and a wide circulation of practical manuals, periodicals, and encyclopedias."

diameter of the cylinder, including allowance for variations in barometric pressure and also friction" (Musson and Robinson 1969: 47–8). And finally, this engine culture mentality was an obvious feature in the work of John Smeaton (1714–92) – founder of the civil engineering profession and innovator of waterwheels – who conducted scientifically-controlled, mathematically-tabulated investigations of the atmospheric steam engine and read numerous papers, as a Fellow of the Royal Society, on mechanics, scientific instruments, and astronomy. Each was committed public participant who rationalized, piece by piece, the entire British economy.

When Jacob says that "no single event in the history of early modern Europe altered the fortunes of the new science more profoundly than the English [1688] Revolution," she means to re-assert – against Marxists and economists who think that humans are motivated only by the location and prices of resources – the "extraordinary link" between the scientific spirit of utilitarian improvement and the Puritans' millenarian vision of spiritual redemption thorough hard work and worldly reform (1997: 51). The conduct of British machinists and entrepreneurs in the eighteenth century were not mere responses to institutional incentives. They were authentic values infused with a religious zeal and a spirit of conviction. The ethos Jacob finds in England, and observes in detail in the Watts family as early as 1690, is a Calvinist commitment to undertake rational, arduous tasks, "disciplined labor, and self-examination within a universe framed by piety and science" (119).

It was not that Calvinism as such brought modern science to industry. Jacob knows too well the strong links Britain's steam engine culture had with the seventeenth century Baconian vision that science could be made useful to ordinary people rather than remaining a monopoly of the "supercilious arrogance" of scholastic culture – as had already been demonstrated by the world of the European Renaissance, by shipbuilding and the voyages of exploration, by cartography and the science of geography, by the use of perspective in painting, by the spread of printing presses, by the rise of a new lay intelligentsia, and by the cultivation of a science of ballistics and a technology of cannon-making. But Jacob wants to remind us – in a scholarly tradition that goes back to Max Weber and also Robert Merton's classic work of the 1930s, *Science, Technology and Society in Seventeenth Century England* – how Puritanism, more than any other religious current within Christianity, endowed scientific knowledge with millenarian

importance. This religious-utilitarian ethos, preached by Quakers and liberal Anglicans, cannot be ignored in our efforts to understand why the *first* successful application of modern science occurred in Britain.

Contingency versus Long Term Patterns

Goldstone, along with all the revisionists, presumes that ascribing any long term pattern to the rise of the West is tantamount to believing that Europe was inevitably and intrinsically set to evolve the way it did since ancient times. Jack Goody thus warns us,

> to be wary of interpreting history in a teleological fashion, that is, interpreting the past from the standpoint of the present, projecting contemporary advantage back to earlier times (2006: 6).

Taking a long term perspective, or searching for continuities and connections between the present and the past, is a sound historical method so long as one does not impute inevitability. Looking for antecedents and cumulative changes, with the benefit of knowing what in fact transpired in history, is not the same as arguing that the whole process was a self-propelled, auto-dynamic sequence of steps. In their extremist desire to strip Europe of any deep-seated, differentiating characteristics, revisionists have left themselves with no option but to treat history as an unending series of "lucky shots" and abrupt turns.[27]

The reality is that the standard Eurocentric model does not presume, as Wong contends, "a unidirectionality of social development" (1997: 210). Some economic historians (North 1981) have tended, it is true, to assume that human beings are rational actors with a "natural" disposition to maximize their wealth and increase their productivity; thus framing their explanations in terms of the institutions and cultural values that may have inhibited or promoted this natural propensity (1981: 20–32). Yet, in fairness, even the seemingly directional arguments of North, for example, do not envision the emergence of *homo oeconomicus* as an inevitable process. In the first place, this predisposition is assumed to be true of humans across all cultures. Secondly, the logic of North's argument is that this disposition will manifest itself in a more effective and rational manner when certain institutional preconditions

[27] Europeans, writes Langlois "weren't just lucky; they were lucky many times over (2008: 141); see also Hobson (313–16) and Marks (2002: 10–15) for repetitive references to accidents and windfalls.

are met. This is why North formulated a "theory of property rights" (dealing with incentives), a "theory of the state" (dealing with fiscal policies), and a "theory of ideology" (dealing with the influences of norms and values). He thought that it was the successful establishment of private property rights in England between 1500 and 1700 that gave it the institutional basis for the subsequent take-off in the eighteenth century – as compared to the "absolute" powers held by the French and Spanish monarchs over taxation (as was evident, for example, in France where revenues were raised through the imposition of multiple internal tariffs) which had the effect of separating regional markets, raising transaction costs, and thus discouraging innovations (143–57). North wrote as well of the influence of a wide range of contingent factors. He never assumed that the transition was an inevitable by-product of economic man. To the contrary, the island of Britain was quite exceptional in the slow maturation of a set of institutions and values that eventually gave freer play to the pursuit of economizing strategies that, through a concatenation of contingencies and events, led to the industrial revolution (158–70).[28]

Hardly any historian or sociologist today speaks in terms of inevitability. Change is always about probabilities. There is no need to use terms like "inevitable" or "necessary" to explain the *actual* historical process which led to the first industrial revolution. These terms are not even part of science; "determinism" is the appropriate term, and on the basis of the theory of probability, determinism should be understood to mean only that the appearance of such and such phenomena is probable (or improbable) with such and such a degree of likelihood (Bunge 1979).[29] The degree of probability for an industrial revolution in Europe

[28] In many ways, in North the active agent is an institutionally domesticated character rather than an economically assertive seeker of wealth. "Institutions are the rules of the game in a society or, more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction" (North 1990: 3).

[29] Jeremy Black is also apprehensive of perspectives of the past that suggest "a degree of inevitability." The past, he writes, "cannot be understood if the elements of chance and contingency are ignored." He equates contingency with free will and morality and "inevitability with "impersonal forces". He even cautions against the "perspective of hindsight" (2000: 133). It seems to me that without hindsight every answer to every question would amount to no more than an indifferent choice among an infinite number of chance events. Hindsight (with regard to what in fact happened) does not imply inevitability. It implies making a distinction between important and less important events in light of what we already know transpired later on. It implies looking for probable patterns. The Western idea of freedom – as I will argue in the next chapters – is not about the arbitrary or chancy use of one's free will. The freedom of

was very high by the 1750s. It was very low, or highly improbable, in Qing China.

Some revisionists prefer to use the term "conjuncture." But this term, as it is used by world systems historians, is actually part of a rigid theoretical framework in which the internal histories of nations and cultures are tied to the dynamics of the world capitalist system. It is a concept which has worked marvelously well for world historians in allowing them to shift attention away from Europe's unruly culture. The term says that in the 16th century a world system was created that came to envelope and somehow overpower the internal dynamics of the cultures of the world, particularly of Europe. O'Brien has thus argued that the first industrial revolution had Chinese, Indian and African "antecedents" and that it was within this "conjuncture" of antecedent forces that the "relative and short-lived economic success" of England was made possible.[30] My reply is that all events in history have

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the individual is a Western phenomenon with deep historical roots; we can comprehend these roots and the history of freedom not because the process was inevitable – a multiplicity of contingent events were part of its history – but because we can look back with hindsight and examine the past in light of what actually came about in subsequent times.

See Joseph Bryant (2006) for an effective criticism against the revisionist short-sighted view of history: "In place of cumulative, path-dependent lines of causality and densely contextual interdependencies, the revisionist paradigm offers a more episodic and atomistic view of social change, wherein determinant efficacy is vested not with ongoing trajectories and systemic institutional configurations, but with the autonomous play of variables and the re-routings occasioned by extraneous contingencies. […] Kinship patterns, population dynamics, state-formation, status and class relations, technological and scientific advances, the fashioning of worldviews and moral codes, production and exchange, war-making capabilities, environmental degradation and resource depletions: these kinds of organized relations and pursuits are all governed by long and medium-term developmental trends, and each is complexly conditioned by the larger constellations of mediating structures and processes within which they arise and function. A conception of world history that slights or minimizes the extent to which social phenomena are subject to path-dependent logics, whereby the prior states of a system order and limit the developmental possibilities for subsequent states of that system, will fail to register the depth-historical precedents and conditions that give form and direction to the social trajectories that variously intersect in the collective making of histories and societies" (437–38). The limitation of Bryant, as I will clarify in the next chapter, is that he sees long term patterns from a Marxist perspective.

[30] He writes that the British industrial revolution has to be "interpreted and contextualized as a conjuncture formed by the ebb and flow of global history" (2006b: 1–8). But if all the regions of the world should be so contextualized, why did one region industrialize first? O'Brien, as we saw in chapter two and three, once accepted the 'Eurocentric consensus' on the role of colonial profits, but in recent years he has headed a rather lucrative program, Global Economic History Network, at LSE, dedicated to downgrading Britain as a mere region of the world whose achievements rested on the merits of other civilizations.

antecedents, but there were no cultural indications elsewhere in the world that a revolution was on the way in the same way that we can account for the rapid convergence of Western Europe after England's first steps – this in contrast to the breakdown of China's "efflorescence" despite the masses of silver that landed in her coffers and despite her supposed dominance over the world economy.

Europe's Solo Act: A Mercantile-Militaristic State?

Revisionists have willingly granted to Europe the "genuine" creation of an efficient state apparatus dedicated to the enforcement of uneven exchanges throughout the world-system. Hobson pushes this idea further, maintaining that Europe's originality consisted in the making of a "racist" state. The Chinese (and other powerful Eastern societies) could have chosen "to colonize Europe and absorb it into their cultural orbit" but "China's identity" was "designed to maintain Chinese cultural autonomy in the face of potential 'barbarian' invaders…Accordingly, the Chinese chose to eschew imperialism" (308). While Hobson follows closely the view that British capital accumulation was significantly dependent on the triangular trade (193), he thinks that Europe was not a mere "passive" recipient of non-Western goodies but was actively engaged in the creation of a militaristic state.

Hobson thus spends a great deal of time challenging "the myth" of a peaceful "laissez faire" state, a myth he attributes to Eurocentric historians. He locates this myth in Peter Mathias's "standard" textbook, *The First Industrial Nation, An Economic History of Britain 1700–1914* (1969). According to Hobson, Mathias is a classic exponent of the idea that industrialization came with minimal state participation, low taxes, balanced budgets, free trade, and a peaceful foreign policy.

It is worth looking at what Mathias actually writes in particular since this book is the one example I have seen from revisionists in support of their (widely accepted) claim that historians have traditionally explained England's industrialization in terms of Adam Smith's ideal of perfect markets. What Mathias says is exactly the opposite; in fact it is almost identical to what Hobson says (minus the "racist" accusation and minus the Marxist ideology): If Hobson says that "in the important period (1688–1815) the British state was at war for no less than 52 per cent of the time," and that large amounts of government expenditures, particularly between 1715–1815, went to defense spending (245–46), Mathias observes that the second largest item of government

spending, in about the same periods, "was consistently military expenditure – one-third approximately of the whole in peacetime and rising to almost two-thirds in war" (38). Where Hobson challenges the myth of balanced budgets and shows that "between 1688 and 1815 the accumulated public debt stood at a colossal 180 per cent of national income" (247), Mathias argues that government spending "was in excess of income from taxes to the tune of 9 million in 1711; 11 million in 1761; 15 million in 1782; and 36 million…in the desperate year of 1797" (42). Where Hobson laments that the British state levied "highly regressive taxes," and that it essentially "paid interest to rich financial investors with regressive indirect taxes that were raised mainly from the lower income groups" (254), Mathias recognizes that, between 1799 and 1816, and later, "the real burden of taxation was highly regressive," and that in "peacetime, typically, more than 50 per cent of expenditure went into paying the interest on the national debt – a transfer operation…back to the [rich classes of society]" (38). And where Hobson says that "Britain enjoyed an average tariff of no less than 32 percent between 1700 and 1850" (248–52), Mathias points out that "England became a high tariff country at the end of the seventeenth century…Protection…did not end until the 1840s" (32).

Mathias's point was simply that British industrialization came with less government involvement in the private sector as "compared with countries like France, Prussia, or even Russia…and with the industrialization in all other countries in later times" (31). British industrialization "was not the result of deliberate government policy sponsoring industrial progress." The British state was laissez faire in the sense that it did not actively participate in the planning and financing of infrastructural works such as canals and railways. Neither did the government pay much attention to health, sanitation, and education. By comparison, the French government financed just over 25 percent of the cost of railway lines as of 1848, and the Russian state built, owned, and operated the railways.

The British were not for a minimalist state when it came to military competition and naval warfare. Every revisionist I have read has confounded this distinction. The "conventional" picture of British industrialization does not posit, as Hobson claims, a society characterized by "the absence of warfare" (245). Western Europe saw the rise of a politically independent merchant class, but this observation is not synonymous with the view that Western economies were backed by a peaceful state dedicated to the principles of open market exchange.

Pomeranz also challenges the contrast between a "liberal" Europe and a "despotic" China, by contrasting the intensively militaristic competition of European states, both between and with other states, to the less belligerent support Chinese state officials gave to the promotion of overseas markets. He notes that, whereas European states pursued a *political* economy that nurtured "property in privileges, ranging from tax farms and venal office to state-granted monopolies," China "had in Qing times only two significant nationally licensed monopolies…sold rather few offices[…and] had no public debt" (2000: 196). Pomeranz does not deny the development in Europe of certain liberal traits, such as firmer property rights, representation "for the propertied", and the extension of civil liberties. But he adds that these traits cannot be understood under such headings as "liberalization" and "modernization;" they should be seen as epiphenomenal products of the coercive character of European capitalism; representative institutions were "often granted or confirmed in return for revenue needed for war" (197), they were strategic tools in the advancement of imperialism.[31]

Mielants, a student of Wallerstein, emphasizes above all else the rise of mercantilist states and their employment of military coercion. He traces this merchant-controlled state back to the commercial cities of the medieval era. He argues that the ability of mercantile elites to take over their "representative" city-states was a phenomenon "exceptional to Europe," allowing it to follow a "unique" path of capitalist accumulation. This path consisted in the promotion of a type of long distance trade characterized by "unequal exchanges," "colonial enterprises," and "the subjugation and exploitation" of wage labor (70–83).

Although living standards and agricultural yields "were no more advanced in Western Europe than in many other parts of the world" in 1800, the great civilizations of Asia did not make a transition to industrial capitalism for the reason that their states were not taken over by their otherwise wealthier merchant elites. Chinese merchants did engage in extensive maritime trade but they did so without state-military backing. Mielants writes that, "while piracy did occur, the generally peaceful nature of Asian trade in the Indian Ocean prior to the arrival of the Portuguese and the Dutch stood in sharp contrast to

[31] In his review article of Hobson's book, Pomeranz says (2006: 350–52) that Hobson "is most original" in questioning the idea that early modern Western states were liberal and rational. He accepts this aspect of Hobson's argument but not the "pivotal role" that he assigns to a European racist identity.

the latter's aggressive policies" (68–69). It was this lack of political power by Asian merchants – not any lack of business acumen or commercial means – that left them prey to European intrusions. While the Europeans were unable to impose themselves immediately on the more advanced economies of Asia, the roots of Europe's uniqueness date "back to the medieval city-states for whom warfare and commerce were a 'double vocation' " (113).

Military Revolutions in Europe 1300–1800

There has long been a tradition of "standard" military historians and historical sociologists who have explained the rise of European bureaucratic governments (or "nation-states") in terms of the functional requirements of modern artillery warfare. Jeremy Black, Michael Mann, Charles Tilly, Geoffrey Parker, and others have all noted, albeit in varying ways, how the fiscal demands of war increased substantially during the sixteenth century, and how this encouraged the rise of powerful nation-states dedicated to imperial success. Mann has provided detailed calculations showing that the administration of war and the engagement in warfare were by far the largest component of activity and expenditure of modern European states (1986: 450–54). In the case of England, he calculated that, for the long period between 1130 and 1815, the state spent between 75% and 95% of all revenues on war and preparations for wars (1992: 130). Parker observed that France in the last years of Louis XIV's reign was spending 75% of its income on war, while England in the 1650s was spending 90% to the upkeep of the army and navy (1996: 62).

There is no question that European states were extremely aggressive. During the entire period between 1500 and 1700 Europeans were absorbed in some kind of war two years out of every three or three years out of every four. The 16th and 17th centuries combined saw a total of only ten years of total peace across the continent.

I am persuaded that a higher degree of aggression was one of the defining characteristics of Europeans since barbarian times, combined with a greater love for liberty and a higher disposition for rationalization. In this chapter I will restrict this question to the early modern era, as it has been debated by standard historians. Why were early modern European states so militaristic? The answers to these questions have centered on the idea of a "military revolution". This idea was introduced

by Michael Roberts (1955), who argued that the introduction of muskets and the growth in army size between 1560 and 1660 constituted a radical break with the past age of knights, lances and pikes. Today, however, it is Geoffrey Parker's outstanding work of scholarship, *The Military Revolution: Military innovation and the rise of the West, 1500–1800* (1988/1996), which is associated with this idea. Of the numerous specialized authors who have debated this revolution, Parker's book is the most directly engaged with the global dimensions of this issue, asking: how it was that Europe, despite "its smaller resources," came to control over one third of the world by 1800?

Parker starts with the observation that in the early 16th century new techniques of fortification, the *trace italienne*, combined with the spread of gunpowder weapons, led to a style of warfare dominated by protracted sieges, which in turn encouraged dramatic increases in the size of armies. The 1500s also witnessed a revolution in naval warfare, with the genesis of large warships, "capital ships," using heavy artillery. This thesis was criticized for viewing innovation in weaponry as an independent factor with a dynamic of its own. It was also criticized for using the term "revolution" to account for changes that occurred over three hundred years. According to Jeremy Black, the enhanced administrative and financial capacity of the modern state was a necessary requirement for the rapid increase in the size of armies and military expenditures. In his view, the really decisive changes in warfare occurred after 1660 (1991). Later, Black concluded that the changes Parker analyzed were "not in fact revolutionary, but long-term and evolutionary" (2000: 57). Other critics, on the other hand, drew attention to the "truly revolutionary changes" during the period of the Hundred Years' War (1337–1453), in the greater role of infantry, in the emergence of close-order linear formations, and in the reliance on missile (longbow) fire rather than on cavalry shock action (Rogers 1993; Ayton and Price 1998).

In the second edition of *The Military Revolution* (1996), Parker, I would say, found a convenient way to assimilate these criticisms by endorsing Clifford Roger's punctuated equilibrium model, which is a well-respected theory originally proposed in evolutionary biological terms (Eldredge and Gould 1972). This theory suggests that in species evolution there is an alternation of short periods of rapid changes (punctuation) followed by a return to longer periods of negligible change (equilibrium). Rogers, one of the critics of Parker's thesis, used this model to propose that Europe may well have experienced a "whole

series of [military] revolutions," both before and after the 16th century. Parker borrowed this model to divide the long period between 1500 and 1800 into three shorter "punctuated" periods: between 1510 and 1560, between 1580 and 1630, and between 1690 and 1715. He then gave "central importance" to the 16th century "because it witnessed the emergence of three key innovations": the capital ship, the development of gunpowder weapons, and artillery-resistant fortifications (156–7).

I am not a military historian, but I tend to agree with most experts' endorsement (Boot 2006: 528) of Parker's use of the term "punctuated changes" rather than "evolution". There are countless debates about the radical character (or not) of a wide range of transformations in European history: the Papal Revolution, the Printing Revolution, the Copernican Revolution, the Tudor Revolution, the Glorious Revolution, and so on – precisely because the history of the West has been characterized by a sequence of continuous departures at different tempos and at different levels of social life. This constant state of novel changes has encouraged, paradoxically, the misleading impression that Western history has been evolutionary and slow.[32]

To continue with Parker, it is important to keep in mind his additional argument that it was the military revolution that "allowed the West to make the most of its smaller resources in order to resist and, eventually, to expand to global dominance" (175). In contrast to the revisionist preoccupation with the origins of modern growth, Parker frames the debate in terms of Europe's superior military capacity. Hobson, Mielants, and Pomeranz either avoid this issue altogether or simply use it against some imagined Whiggish vision of Europe as a land of honey and milk. They are Marxists, and so we should not be surprised if their aim is to condemn as they try to explain Europe's

[32] For every revolution in European history there are two interpretative camps: one insisting on its revolutionary character and another on its evolutionary character. In the case of the latter camp, some emphasize prior changes to argue that what came later was not a "sudden birth" in the degree to which it had been anticipated by what came before; whereas others look to subsequent changes to argue that the "revolution" was not as exceptional in the degree to which it was overshadowed by what came later. The Scientific Revolution has thus been viewed by some as an evolutionary continuation of Roger Bacon's experimental philosophy, Jean Buridan's explanation of projectile motion, and Nicole Oresme's depiction of uniformly accelerated motion (Grant 1996; Lindberg 1992). And, conversely, it has been viewed as not "modern" enough in comparison to the highly specialized, professionalized, and ever proliferating family of modern sciences that emerged in rapid succession later on (Anstey and Schuster 2005). Similar arguments have been made about every "revolution," "renaissance," "reformation," or "transition" in the history of Europe.

imperial successes. By contrast, Park looks at this question with fair eyes; he believes that Europe's divergence began in the 16th century, not in the 18th and certainly not in the 1800s. He rejects the idea that only with industrialization and the emergence of mechanized warfare were Europeans able to achieve world supremacy (117). It was from 1800 to 1914, to be sure, that Europeans extended their control from 35% of the land surface of the globe to almost 85%. But Parker wants to know how they acquired that initial 35% prior to 1800. He observes that, by 1650, the West had already attained military and economic mastery over south, central and northeast America, some coastal areas of sub-Saharan Africa, and much of the Philippines.

He recognizes that some Muslim states were the beneficiaries of their own "extensive and sophisticated military tradition," that they "adopted and mastered Western military technology with remarkable speed and thoroughness" (174, 126). The Turks achieved military victories over the Venetians in the 1660s, over the Russians in 1711, and over Austria in 1737–9. Spanish attacks on Algiers failed in 1775 and in the 1780s. But overall, he adds, the Ottomans were unable to master the full potentialities of the revolution in artillery (weapons and defences). This was partly due to the inferiority of their metallurgical industries, which made their naval artillery, for example, "too brittle for safe and effective use" (128).

Mughal artillery faced similar problems; and, all in all, "princely India only adopted Western inventions…reluctantly…too little and too late" (136). Although Mughal India was an advanced culture with an army that numbered over a million and it was impossible for it to be conquered as the Spanish had the Aztecs and Incas, the Mughal armies "remained aggregations of individual heroic warriors" (130). This was in stark contrast to the premium Europeans placed on drill, close-order formations and firing by volley, from the 17th century onwards. By 1765 the Mughal Emperor was compelled militarily to recognize the right of the British East India Company to collect all state revenues in the provinces of Bihar, Orissa, and Bengal. The outright colonization of India was now a "real possibility" (135).

Parker thinks that, by 1500, the iron and bronze guns of Western industry were superior to those of East Asia, which the Asians themselves recognized as they started adopting Western gunnery during the seventeenth century. The Chinese were able to keep the Europeans at a distance until the 1800s, and yet their naval guns barely developed. To give one telling recollection: a large imperial warship off Canton in 1637 was described by an English traveler as having only light cast-iron

pieces, and as "so weakly plancked and timbred" that it could not carry heavier guns. In the meantime, Europe had long been caught up in a naval arms race, so that, by 1688, the Dutch navy numbered 102 warships, the English 173, the French 221; "almost all the capital ships were two or three-deckers carrying between fifty and 100 heavy guns" (Parker 2000: 128). The Chinese did improve on their own close-order drill for infantry, but not to the point of achieving the advantages of what McNeill phrased as "keeping together in time" (2000: 307). China sustained its sovereignty through the long period between 1500 and 1800, but not after the Industrial Revolution.

Black tries to moderate (somewhat) Parker's argument, by noting "the extent to which the Europeans were not the sole dynamic powers in the world" (2000: 20). Europe's ability to exercise power on the globe was limited; thus, the "Portuguese made less of an impact in India than the Mughals" (24); the "Asians were able to respond effectively to the Portuguese"; the Chinese, under the Manchus, extended their imperial dominion over Outer Mongolia, Xinjiang, and Tibet (33, 10); and the Ottomans "enjoyed more military triumphs in the early 1700s than any power in Europe" (102).[33]

Yet, as Parker (1996:132) reminds us, until the late 1700s, the Europeans "did not even try" to conquer the lands of Asia. Goldstone's persistent assertions that Asians were able to hold the Europeans at bay are beside the point (2008: 127). The Europeans navigated to Asia in search of spices and riches, not lands; they brought military force only to impose monopolistic prices, *and* to fight each other. The nation-states of Europe spent most of their time and resources fighting against one another *both* inside and outside Europe. Black actually acknowledges that by the 15th and 16th century, technological change within Europe "achieved a greater momentum than in…the Islamic world and increasingly, more than in China" (58). "In terms of weaponry, 17th century Indian warfare was hardly innovative…not interested in firearms technology" (84, 210). Indian ships were sewn together with

[33] It does not occur to Black (and to revisionists alike) that the great conquests of the Qing dynasty were initiated by the Manchus after they had conquered the Chinese themselves. While it is true that the Manchus had long been exposed to Chinese cultural influences, willingly adopting their ways after they brought the Ming dynasty down in 1644, they nevertheless maintained their ethnic identity, prohibiting intermarriage between Manchus and Chinese. The question then may *not* be how the Chinese were able to achieve great conquests under the Qing, but how an ethnic group of less than 1 million people managed to rule the most populous (and seemingly the most developed) nation in the world without losing its ethnic identity from 1644 to 1911.

rope rather than metal nails. In the end, if only in passing, and without additional reflection, Black saw a fundamental cultural distinction between the West and the East:

> The states with the most effective global range during this period (1450–1900) were western European. The willingness and ability of these societies to organize their resources for maritime enterprise were combined with a degree of curiosity about the *unknown* world, a wish to question rather than to accept received knowledge. This independence of mind and action was especially manifest in the explorers; they sought government support but were not constrained by it (208).

What are the sources of this "independence of mind"? I will start to consider this question in chapter six, but if I may momentarily remind readers that Europe's independent mind extended well beyond the world of exploration; consider these 16th century names: Luther and the principle of individual interpretation of revealed truth; Geneva under Calvin's humanistic voluntarism; Loyola, the Jesuit Order, and the infusion of Catholicism with renewed purpose and intellectual self-mastery; Leonardo, Raphael, Michelangelo and their masterpieces of linear and spatial perfection from empirically accurate anatomy and geometry; Montaigne's scepticism and the invention of "character;" Juan Luis Vives and the education of women; Shakespeare and the representation of the human personality in its mutability; Parecelsus and the advocacy of higher cultural prestige for the practical know-how of artisans and craftsmen; Copernicus and the proposition of a sun-centered cosmology; Francisco de Vitoria and the origins of international law and human rights; Vesalius's *De Fabrica* and the presentation of an extended, systematic and illustrated account of every part of the human body; Bruegel and the depiction of human nature in its less disguised peasant-like rustic manner; Descartes and his "entirely novel" method of reasoning; Bacon and the advocacy of knowledge for the improvement of the human condition; Bodin and the sovereignty of the nation-state; Wheeler's *Treatise of Commerce* (1601) and the beginnings of a nationalist discourse on economics, and a new ethic of economic grandeur and prosperity.

The Inter-State System

The question at hand is why Europe was more dynamic militarily than the rest of the world? Although Parker comes to agree (in his revised

edition) with Black that the dramatic enlargement of state bureaucracies after 1500 should not be seen as a mere consequence of the military revolution, he never explores this relationship. Now, Black does examine the ways in which increases in military costs promoted state-building and the ways in which success in warfare depended on the capacity of states to marshal resources (2000: 203–231). He adds that the capability of the state to fund warfare was in turn dependent on the dynamics of the economy, the realignments of class power, and the political culture. Unfortunately, Black, a prolific military historian, does not tie up together his insightful impressions on all these connections into a vision that would allow us to ascertain the dynamics of Europe. To learn more about Europe's state/military/class dynamic, we must turn to the work of historical sociologists, namely, Perry Anderson, Randall Collins, Immanuel Wallerstein, and Charles Tilly.

But here we encounter another exhausting debate over which factor was primary in the rise of nation-states in Europe: the expanding needs of a capitalist (or still feudal) economy, or the military requirements of power-seeking states? Rather than rehearsing this debate, I will point out that there is some agreement that these two dynamics were important and interconnected. In *Coercion, Capital, and European States* (1990), Tilly synthesizes these two (Marxist and Weberian) perspectives.[34] He argues that the global dynamic of European states was a result of the fusion of both capitalism and military might, of the military and political ambitions of the state, and of the economic interests of the mercantile elites. Those nation states that were able to draw extensively on the wealth created by capitalists – by co-opting the bourgeoisie as a partner in the state – were the most successful ones in increasing their concentration of the means of coercion against their foes. It was after 1500 that national states came to emerge in England and France, as Italy and Germany remained weak and subdivided into numerous cities, duchies, and feudal principalities; and as Russia,

[34] By "Weberian" I mean sociologists who, in this context, emphasize the link between warmaking costs and the growth of the state (Mann 1992). I contrast this view to the Marxist emphasis on the links between capitalist (or feudal) interests and the state (Anderson 1974; Wallerstein 1974). Weberians accept Weber's definition of the modern state such that "a state is a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory" (in Tilly 70). Hobson, Mielants, and revisionists at large, do not mind this definition as long as it is combined with a dominant Marxist definition, both of which they use to counter, in even stronger terms, the notion of a rising Western liberal-democratic state.

Poland, and Hungary continued to be dominated by a strong alliance between the landlord class and the monarch. The nation-state was a whole new entity in the way it came to be identified with a particular nationality and the way this nationality was promoted by centrally coordinated administrators devoted to both the pursuit of mercantile wealth and military power (38–95).

Tilly, however, can take us only so far; his interest is on the variety of states that prevailed in Europe since AD 990 rather than on the rise of the West. Clearly, we need more than explanations about how military innovations made states and vice versa. What was it about Europe that engendered more than one military revolution? Why were European states built up "exclusively" for the making of war and the imperialistic promotion of capitalist expansion? Or, in the words of Tilly, why has war "been the dominant activity of European states" (74)?

Here we must turn to another group of scholars who have emphasized the idea that Europe's dynamism lay in the fact that in the 16th century, in the words of Jones, it "became a single system of states in which change in one cell affected the others" (2003: 104). This has been one of the most fashionable ways to account for Europe's dynamism. Most Eurocentrics have made some reference or other to Europe's highly competitive interstate system. It is an idea that goes back to Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Adam Smith. Complementing the observations of these classical thinkers, Mann, Hall, Jones, Chirot and others, have argued that one of the most striking aspects of European history, compared to Asia's, is that Europe was never united into an empire after the *pax Romana,* whereas the Near East and China were unified early on in their histories. They have attributed Europe's fragmentation into competing states to the geographical division of Europe, by mountains and sea, in comparison to the civilizations of Asia where major rivers and open plains made centralization less difficult. They have detailed how the division of Europe into states of more or less equal strength cultivated a situation that helped to diffuse ideas and technologies as each nation felt pressured to keep up with its competitors. By contrast a large empire in control of the means of coercion, and unthreatened by equally matched neighbours "had little incentive to adopt new methods" (Jones 2003: 118).

Moreover, while the political landscape of Europe since medieval times was already fragmented by a multiplicity of feudal landowners, each with jurisdictional and military/private control over their lands, this type of rule was characterized by incessant violence at the local

and regional levels. Only with the rise of nation-states, and the monopolization of the means of violence, centralized taxation, and the magnification of royal justice, was there enough stability for the "diffusion of best practices in technology and commerce" and for economic development to occur within each nation (Jones 2003: 149).

Diamond adopted this idea to explain why Europe, among Eurasian societies, came to dominate the globe, expressing it succinctly:

> Once Spain launched the European colonization of America, other European states saw the wealth flowing into Spain, and six more joined in colonizing America. The story was the same with Europe's cannon, electric lighting, printing, small firearms, and innumerable other innovations: each was a first neglected or opposed in some parts of Europe for idiosyncratic reasons, but once adopted in one area, it eventually spread to the rest of Europe. These consequences of Europe's disunity stand in sharp contrast to those of China's unity. From time to time the Chinese court decided to halt other activities besides overseas navigation; it abandoned development of an elaborate water-driven spinning machine, stepped back from the verge of an industrial revolution in the fourteenth century, demolished or virtually abolished mechanical clocks after leading the world in clock construction, and retreated from mechanical devices and technology in general after the late fifteenth century (413).

Diamond attributed this political disunity to the fact that Europe was divided into five relatively isolated peninsulas, as well as carved up by high mountains, whereas China's heartland was bound "together from east to west by two long navigable river systems" (414).

Clearly, this emphasis on Europe's geography and belligerence is but a few steps away from Hobson's and Mielants's outlook. It is no accident that David Christian has incorporated it into his argument that "the state systems of Europe" produced a "competitive and often brutal commercialism…from the fifteenth century onwards," which trained and "adapted" Europe to the conquest of the Americas from which it extracted the resources by which it built its global supremacy (Christian 2005: 391–93). To Christian there was not much to the West other than its global location as a "hub" region in-between the more advanced civilizations of Asia and the Americas. The interstate idea, however, is not a good explanation. Europe was already exceptionally innovative and antagonistic during the medieval and the ancient eras. Jones himself insists, despite his emphasis on the era of nation-states, that "throughout the medieval and early modern period" Europe saw "cumulative" technological changes in the economy.

"Ceaseless tinkering is a defining characteristic of the culture" from about 1000 AD onwards (2003: 62–3). He agrees essentially with Lynn White's well-known claim that, in the Middle Ages, one sees for the first time the modern notion of "the invention of invention."[35]

Moreover, before 1500, as Tilly observes, European overlords were even "more exclusively" (74) preoccupied with warfare. According to Robert Bartlett (1993) one of the "most striking aspects" of the period from 900 to 1350 was the "expansionism", "boldness" and "brutality" exhibited by German aristocratic warriors who moved into Estonia, into Silesia, and throughout Bohemia; and by the Franks who established new kingdoms in Castile, Portugal, Cyprus, Jerusalem, and Sicily. This was, after all, the age of the *Reconquista* and the Crusades. Chris Wickham (1994), for his part, criticizes Bartlett with the observation that the Carolingians of the prior age were no less aggressive

[35] Blaut dismisses White's research (2000). I believe that White's research on medieval culture and technological change, though published in the 1950 to 1970s, still remains indispensable. White set out to challenge the idea "that the Middle Ages were an Age of Faith, which therefore must have been antipathetic toward anything legitimately called science, and that their technology was both static and negligible" (1978b: 76). He certainly did push too far in believing that "even in the early Middle Ages, the parts of Europe, adhering to the Latin Church began to show a technological dynamism superior to that of the generally more sophisticated cultures of Byzantium and Islam" (1978b: 77). He may also have exaggerated in thinking that medieval (northwestern) Europe developed a "new kind of agriculture which in terms of human labor was more productive than of any other civilized society of the time" (77). White, however, does cite Needham and does pay attention to European borrowings. My impression is that, as the years went by, and as more information and research was accumulated about the diffusion of technologies from Asia to Europe, he came to acknowledge European borrowings in ways he had not done in his earlier writings. White thought that Europeans came to adapt Asian techniques to their needs, improving upon them, but he also thought that they introduced many inventions of their own and that, most importantly, they started a "continuous development" of technology (80) for the first time in world history (see also his essay "The Expansion of Technology, 500–1500 AD," 1969). I have not yet seen a well-constructed argument against this claim. McClellan and Dorn, in a text which pays serious attention to the science and technology of Asia and the Americas (1999), write: "European engineers developed a fascination for new machines and new sources of power, and they adopted and developed novel methods of generating and harnessing it. Indeed, *medieval* Europe became the first great civilization not to be run primarily by human muscle power. The most outstanding example concerns the development of water-powered machines and their incorporation into the fabric of village life and European society generally…Anonymous medieval engineers also used wind to turn windmills and tidal flow to drive tidal mills. In so doing they mastered older kinds of mechanical gearing and linkage and invented new ones. Europeans perfected water- and wind-driven mills, the spring catapult, and a host of other devices, and in so doing drew on new sources of nonhumans power. Their civilization was literally driven by comparatively more powerful 'engines' of wind and water which tapped more energy of one sort or another than anywhere else" (180–1).

and expansionary in their colonizing campaigns against the Saxons and the Slavs, and in the creation of their empire. But what about the earlier barbarians who brought about the downfall of the Roman Empire? Or the Romans who created a warrior state where conquest was the imperative and where elites competed for adulation and status?

Greek Hoplites and the "Western Way of War"

It can indeed be argued that well before the early modern era, before the "Military Revolution" of the 1500s, Europeans were quite innovative in their weaponry, discipline, strategic reasoning and tactics. As we noted above, Rogers thinks that "the most dramatic, most truly revolutionary changes in European military affairs took place" during the Hundred Years' War (1993). But, again, why stop with the Middle Ages? What about Victor Davis Hanson's thesis that the ancient Greeks initiated a "Western style of warfare" infused with an "individual" and a "rational" energy that would engender "the most deadly soldiers in the history of civilization" (2001)? Hanson is never mentioned in the revisionist literature; nevertheless, his thesis has been endorsed by two of the most renowned current military historians: John Keegan *and* Parker. Hanson's argument is that, sometime between 800–500 BC, the Greeks developed a style of fighting characterized by i) the use of heavy infantry in tightly packed linear formations, ii) the training of soldiers to "take and hold ground and fight face-to-face", iii) the pursuit of "decisive" confrontations with the enemy, iv) the reliance on independent farmers capable of self-arming themselves, v) the cultivation of a science of warmaking and a "vibrant body of practical-hands-on military research," independently of religious beliefs and constraints, and vi) the existence of a culture of warfare based on citizens with a "sense of personal freedom," "egalitarian camaraderie," and "individual initiative" (1989; 2001).

Hanson calls this style "the Western Way," insofar as the Greeks started a pattern of warfare that has been continuous for 2,500 years in the West. The Macedonians, Romans, and later Europeans revised and added new tactics, weapons, and strategies, but they did not depart from the fundamental principles of the "Western Way". Thus, the Macedonians, under Philip II, added the 'companion cavalry', an elite body of aristocratic horsemen, integrating horse and infantrymen, and they also lengthened the spear from eight to nearly fourteen feet.

The Romans, through a long period of evolution lasting nearly a millennium, created a more fluid and open order of legionaries, armed with throwing-javelins and short double-edged swords. They also raised discipline to new levels of professionalism, and backed their marching armies with a superb infrastructure consisting of roads, camps, hospitals, armour, pensions, and salaries (2000b; 2000c).

John Lynn (2003) puts together a series of valuable counter-observations against Hanson, challenging the claim that the Greek-Roman manner of fighting, with citizen-soldiers, remained "continuous" through Imperial Rome and the Middle Ages. He brings up good examples showing that the Western way was not always successful against Asian armies; in fact, Central Asia produced some of the greatest fighters in history, the Parthians, Avars, Huns, the Mongols, and the Seljuk Turks. The Mongols and the Turks (including the Ottomans) may very well have been the "most successful military tradition in history," considering the amount of territory they dominated "before the modern era" (23). He questions as well the sharp distinction Hanson draws between the Western style and a so-called "Oriental" style typified by "evasion, delay, and indirectness." Chinese armies, for one, were made up of drilled and disciplined peasant landholders.

It should become clearer in chapter seven why I think that many of Lynn's counter-points can be integrated within a broader Western way that includes the "aristocratic" and "pastoral" style of warfare of Indo-European speakers from the Pontic steppes, and the "berserker" style of the Germanic peoples. (This broader definition is able to acknowledge the fighting successes of the Mongols and the Turks, insofar as they were pastoral warriors from the steppes.) Now I want to say that the essentials of Hanson's thesis can be effectively defended in the (revised) manner Parker has in his "Introduction" and "Epilogue" to *Warfare, Cambridge Illustrated History* (2000). He states that the Western way has rested historically on five basic traits. The emphasis of the first trait is on superior technology, and "capital- rather than labor-intensive" armies, to compensate for smaller numbers. This does not mean that the West has always employed more advanced or effective methods of warfare. The recurved bow used by the horse archers of Central Asia was "far more effective than any Western weaponry" until the introduction of musketry volleys and field artillery in the early seventeenth century (2–9). But the horse archers from Asia never posed a direct, internal threat to Europe, and when they did it was not sustained.

In addition to superior technology, the second trait placed an extremely high premium on discipline, drill and long term service – as opposed to kinship or religion – as the primary way by which to create a cohesive force capable of maintaining its ground and position while attacking or while being attacked, without giving in to the natural inclinations of fear and fright.

The third trait concerns military strategy. Ever since Flavius Vegetius put together a compendium of Roman military practice around AD 390 there have been efforts to think in terms of the "laws of war" – the techniques, strategies, and tactics – for the achievement of victory. This insistence upon the systematization of knowledge has come together with an emphasis on total victory, "decisive battle," war with the intention to bring about the utter defeat of the adversary.

For Parker, however, these three traits on their own do not completely distinguish the West from such cultures as China and Japan, which also emphasized technology, discipline, and a high degree of strategic thinking, as evident in the teachings of Sun Tzu. There were two additional traits. The fourth trait involved willingness on the part of the West to learn from others and to meet external challenges in a dynamic, innovative way.

The fifth and final trait was one having to do with an ability to employ the wealth generated by the economy to finance warfare. Parker thus points to the multiple polities competing for power within early modern Europe as having intensified the need for military innovation at the same time that they encouraged the rise of centralized states capable of financing large expensive armies.

In emphasizing these last two traits, Parker is in effect bringing together his own ideas on the "Military Revolution" with certain aspects of Hanson's Western way. He is not explicit but his overall argument is that, from the ancient Greeks onward, the West started a style of warfare with "remarkable consistencies over time" (2000: 365), solidified and improved in the context of the political fragmentation of early modern Europe, which placed "a high premium on rapid adaptation and innovation." Particularly since 1400, "a series of expensive technological and tactical revolutions have punctuated the military history of the West" (367).

Now, while Parker does not deny the many successes of non-Western armies, he believes that, on balance, the superior lethality of the Western way was quite evident since the Persian wars in the 5th century BC when the outnumbered but highly disciplined Greek

hoplites defeated the far larger armies of Xerxes. It was apparent when Alexander the Great's army of fewer than 50,000 destroyed an empire of millions between 334 and 323 BC. Parker sums up his thesis as follows:

> The West seldom suffered successful invasion itself. Armies from Asia and Africa rarely marched into Europe and many of the exceptions – Xerxes, Hannibal, Attila, the Arabs and the Turks – achieved only short-term success. None encompassed the total destruction of their foe. Conversely, western forces, although numerically inferior, not only defeated the Persian and Carthaginian invaders but managed to extirpate the states that sent them. Even the forces of Islam never succeeded in partitioning Europe into 'spheres of influence' in the western manner (9).

Mercantilism and the Birth of Political Economy

Another major drawback of the interstate thesis lies in the way it views Europe's competitive character as being no more than a concentrated expression, as Tilly has it (70), of the "standard" (ordinary) procurement of power and wealth by states across history. It ignores the entirely new "mercantilist" discourse Europeans cultivated during the 1600s in their reflections on the character and dynamics of this interstate system. Mercantilism was a discourse with no parallels elsewhere; the first rational investigation of the relationship between economic wealth and state power. The proponents of this discourse included, in the main, Antonie de Montchrétien (1576–1621), Gerard de Malynes (1586–1641), Edward Misselden (1608–1654), and Thomas Mun (1571–1641). What these thinkers argued, broadly speaking, was that the market was a reality which should be studied in a scientific manner just like any other natural phenomena. The power of the state depended on the wealth of society; the market was a mechanism of wealth creation, and thus the understanding of its "laws" would reveal the underlying economic basis of state power. These were the first European thinkers to write of wealth and power as independent entities in terms of their *modus operandi* freed from all ethical and religious considerations. While they were not advocating free markets, they were arguing, nevertheless, that the world of commercial exchanges should be regarded as a system made up of "mechanical forces" which, if properly understood, could serve the interests of the state (Magnussen 1994: 211–15).

This was a new group of "worldly philosophers" who had come to the realization that trade brought power and power brought wealth (Roll 1983). They maintained that trade, in the words of Weber, ought "to be carried on as far as possible by the merchants of the country, in order that its earnings should accrue to the taxable capacity […] in obvious immediate connection with the power-seeking policy characteristic of the [interstate] system" (1981: 348). The mercantilist "balance of trade" doctrine explained that the total wealth of the world could not be increased, and that, for that reason, the only way for a state to increase its wealth was through a positive balance of trade, a surplus in one's balance of payments and a deficit in one's rivals. Mercantilists thus urged the state to introduce a whole range of protectionist regulations, "including prohibitions of importation and stimulation of exportation" and the "artificial promotion of industries" (348–49) with exclusive rights.

This doctrine was a revolution in the understanding of the relationship between politics and economics. It was a new discourse on the *political economy* of wealth to the extent that it examined this relation on its own terms separately from religious considerations. This discourse was preceded and influenced by Machiavelli's detached discussion of politics from theological matters, and by Jean Bodin's (1520–1596) doctrine that there is in every state a supreme power that is subject to no other power within the territory of the state itself, but to which all else is subject. The revisionists (including some of their critics, Vries, Findlay, and O'Rourke) are political-economists who emphasize the interrelations of "power and plenty" and yet they fail to ponder the intellectual origins of this way of thinking.

Mercantilism laid the foundations for modern (liberal/free market) economics. However, contrary to Hobson, the subsequent creation in the 1800s in England of a laissez-faire state, and also to a lesser extent in France, does not mean that such a state was automatically more peaceful than the Asian states. On the contrary, for some time, even as Enlightenment thinkers were seriously thinking of the possibility of a commercial world "operating to cordialize mankind," in the words of Thomas Paine, "by rendering nations, as well as institutions useful to each other," European governments were increasingly agreeing with a new generation of political economists who were arguing that a free trade economy would generate more wealth for governments to depend on than a mercantilist economy.

The originators of these ideas, known as "the Physiocrats," were located in France. They included, most prominently, Francois Quesnay (1694–1774) and A. R. J. Turgot (1727–1781). They argued that agriculture, not trade, was the sector from which the wealth of a nation originated. The ability to conduct war depended on the monies raised in taxes, and these in turn depended on the net agricultural product. France was facing a fiscal crisis in the late 1700s and, as a solution, the Physiocrats proposed an agrarian reform directed at replacing the old customary relations with voluntary contracts between landlord and tenant. That is, they called for the extension of market relations into agriculture according to which the old land-owning nobility would retain its right of ownership through a capitalist form of leasehold. The Physiocrats also reasoned that, if wealth lay in land, then proprietors should be allowed to maximize their profits through the free play of markets. Free trade would be mutually beneficial between all parties, swaying each producer to specialize in the production of goods over which they had an advantage. Higher agrarian profits would in turn increase the tax-paying capacities of the population, thereby solving the fiscal crisis (Rubin 1979). While Turgot attempted to implement free trade policies when he was Minister of Finance in 1774–76, his reforms were short-lived. England, the most capitalistic European nation since medieval times, would be the one to abolish protectionist tariffs and embrace open markets in the middle of the nineteenth century. Who can forget David Ricardo's famous argument against the Corn Laws: If French farmers are willing to feed us for less than it would "cost" us to feed ourselves, let us eat French food and spend our time doing something else?

It has been a subject of much debate as to why the English state was the eventual winner in the great inter-state struggle for maritime supremacy. Landes thinks that Britain's advantage began in the Middle Ages with the abolition of serfdom and the rise of individual cultivators, and later in the 16th century with the spread of mixed farming (grain and livestock and grain-fed livestock), and the adoption of new techniques of watering, fertilizing, and crop rotation, followed by the enclosures of the 18th century (1998: 214). As was argued earlier, he also states, that England was the beneficiary of a common national identity combined with equality of civil status. For North, her advantage lay in the greater protection of property rights.

Other explanations focus on the immediate naval contest between Britain and France in the 18th century. They ask how it was that France,

with an economy more than double the size of Britain's, was the loser in the mercantilist race for global power. The leading answer is hardly that the British were further ahead in the direction of a "minimalist" state dedicated to low taxes and peaceful dividends. Azar Gat sums up well what the prevailing research says:

> The Netherlands and Britain were the most heavily taxed, whereas absolutist France, conceding the exemption of the aristocracy, had lower tax revenues for its size, and the people of the *despotic Ottoman Empire was the most lightly taxed*. An earlier generation of historians emphasized the greater taxing power of the new centralized absolutist state compared with feudal fragmentation. But more recently it has been recognized that the representative-inclusive state regimes were even stronger and more able to generate and hardness social resources or 'infrastructural power' than the seemingly despotic absolutists states. If early European states variably taxed an estimated 5–15 percent of national income, Britain's wartime taxation exceeded 20 percent in the eighteenth century, two to three times the per capita taxation of France, and four time Britain's own taxation level before the Glorious Revolution of 1688 (490).

Britain was simply a more commercially advanced society, starting in late medieval times when its feudal lords became involved in the growing urban markets, rather than relying on rents extracted from servile serfs. With its greater ethnic homogeneity and its stronger national identity – according to Gat, "evident as early as the 14th century" (498) – the English elites became relatively more committed to the prosperity and power of their country. Added to this were the representative character of the British state and the triumph of Parliament over the kings after the Glorious Revolution of 1688, which resulted in the incorporation of mercantile elites into the power-seeking aims and responsibilities of the state. This commercial-national-representative culture fostered a far more sophisticated financial system, such as stock exchanges and a national bank able to float massive loans. The ability of the English state to engage in deficit financing and to raise low-interest loans contrasted significantly with the French, who in the eighteenth century had to pay interests rates roughly double those of the English (Gat 2006: 485–89).

Now, one can seek "common" ground with the revisionists, as Vries tries to do (2003), by arguing that i) China's small peasant markets were closer to the model of perfect competition (up to 92 per cent of registered land during Qing times was held by private owners); ii) China's Qing government was even less intrusive than Britain's; not only was the Chinese army "comparatively small," but Britain had

"more than 30 times" as many public servants per head of the population; and iii) Qing China "was just as much, or if you prefer, just as little, an 'open society' as Britain was" (8, 28–29).

This argument erroneously equates the presence of numerous property holders underneath a backward state manned by a Confucian meritocracy, which "preferred to leave the market to itself" (22), with the presence of a vibrant civil society in which different private associations and corporate groups stood in between the individual and the state. British citizens may have been less able than ordinary Chinese to climb up to the higher echelons of the social ladder. But explaining Britain's lack of social mobility should not be confused with a reductive and ultimately distorted view of its civil society. British civil society was not, as Vries says, primarily characterized by "privilege, protection, exclusion, hierarchy and manipulation" (34) – as contrasted to a Chinese society where the state governed with lighter hands. Britain's capitalistic oligarchy operated within a vibrant civil society that guaranteed far more rights to its citizens than any other state at the time excepting the Dutch, with their rights of personal liberty, rights of contract, a more efficient financial system, a more transparent and trustworthy legal system, and a truly professional class of civil servants. Vries may be right to suggest – although he offers no evidence – that the share of total wealth claimed by the richest members of the British aristocracy was considerably larger than the share claimed by China's richest; and that less new blood moved into the top of the British class structure. But this (possible) fact should not have been allowed to confound Vries's otherwise correct observation that Britain was "a society in which people could take initiatives and where change and progress were acceptable and often applauded" (9). There was far more occupational diversity and opportunity in Britain than in China. The British elites – scientists, philosophers, engineers, shopkeepers, and entrepreneurs – were not locked into a uniform worldview. In 19th century China one still finds a class of civil servants educated in ancient literary works and largely preoccupied with preserving the traditional order adhering to an ethic of respect, docility, and subordination to elders and political authorities.

Liberty and the States System

England was the first modern liberal nation but it was not exceptional. This brings me to one more challenge I would like to make against the

inter-state idea. The original idea, as it was articulated by Enlightenment thinkers, that Europe's difference consisted in the fragmented character of its polity, included as well the observation that there was a division of power *within* the nation-states themselves. This view can be found in the writings of John Hall (1992), Daniel Chirot (1985, 1986), and Luciano Pellicani (1994). The very same states that dedicated so much energy to warfare, Hall writes, had "evolved slowly and doggedly in the midst of a pre-existing civil society" (1992: 187).

> One other uniqueness of the West is the role that Parliaments played in its history: indeed so unique has this role been that German historians have considered the *Standestaat*, the representation of the three functional estates, Church, Noble and Burgher, to be a particular stage in world history (187).

The *Standestaat* was a type of political structure called the "state of estates", which amounted to a partition of powers in which feudal lords, the church, and towns, recognized the monarch as the legitimate head of the state at the same time that each retained a specific set of rights and duties (Chirot 1986: 17–19). In China, India, and Islam, in general, there were no *countervailing* powers because there was no substantial distinction between the state and civil society; there was no aristocracy with special rights, no separation of religious and secular powers, no independent cities, and no parliaments where relations between the various estates of society were open for adjudication. It was in reference to the absence of a civil society that the category "oriental despotism" was used by Montesquieu, Marx, Weber, and Karl Wittfogel (Pellicani: 81–107). I shall return to this characteristic in the next chapter; suffice it to say now that, as centralized administrations evolved through the modern era, and the old feudal elites saw their privileges curtailed, consensual-liberal rights and limits were nevertheless elicited gradually from the emerging nation-states by aristocrats, town dwellers, lawyers, and commercial elites, albeit not peacefully but through a dynamic succession of conflicts that culminated in the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the French Revolution of 1789.[36]

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[36] Highly competitive systems of states are sometimes said to have existed outside Europe (Black 2000: 207; see also Findley and O'Rourke: 360): in Mughal India under Akbar (1556–1605), Burma under Bayinnaung (1551–81), Persia under Abbas I (1587–1629), and the Ottoman Empire under Mehmed (1656–61) and Ahmed (1661–76). These are inadequate examples for two reasons; first, these were short-lived regimes (mere periodic instances of state breakdown and usurpation of power by regional authorities); and second, these examples leave out the division of powers within the

There is a certain naiveté in the presumption that Europe's liberal institutions were not really liberal because they were associated with the pursuit of global power. It is true that in some liberal-arts courses, or older survey courses in "Western Civilization," the history of the West was occasionally taught as if it were an intellectual history of "great books" and "great ideas." David Gress, in his vigorous book, *From Plato to NATO: the Idea of the West and Its Opponents* (1998) has dubbed this idea the "Grand Narrative" (1998). According to him, this moralistic narrative "established a false dichotomy between some high principles, which existed outside history, and a flawed reality, characterized by inequality, prejudice and war". By presenting Western history in terms of the realization of the ideals of liberty and democracy, this narrative "placed a burden of justification on the West…to explain how the reality differed from the ideal". This dichotomy, Gress argues, offered ample opportunity for cynics to speak of the fraud, hypocrisy, and inconsistency between Western ideals and Western realities. Gress thinks that these critical views of the West can be met so long as we get away from an idealized image of Western uniqueness. He argues that liberal-democratic ideals were not new but "old practices." These practices took hold of society only when "rulers competing for power" came to realize that the promotion of autonomous cities, mercantile interests, taxation with representation "made their societies stronger and more prosperous [and hence fitter] in the geopolitical conditions" of early modern Europe.[37]

I will follow a different line of reasoning in the next chapters. While liberty did not grow separately from mercantile interests and state power, the ideals of natural rights, security, and happiness were actually conceived as limits to the abuses of power. These ideals, moreover,

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states themselves, or what the Marxist Perry Anderson (1975) called "the parcellization of sovereignty" that was characteristic of European feudalism alone. Victoria inbor Hui believes that ancient China experienced similar inter-state dynamics as early modern Europe leading to centralized taxation, monopolization of the means of warfare, and bureaucratization (2005: 38–39). Quoting Bin Wong, she makes light of Europe's "cheerful story of parliamentary institutions and democratic ideology" (40), and then claims that past theorists of state formation have underestimated the logic of domination and the ultimate coercive basis of state power. As we have seen, however, this is a typically Marxist-Weberian argument.

[37] Davies criticizes the teaching of Western civilization as an idealized list of Great Books that "filter out anything that might appear mundane or repulsive" (1996: 28). Still, he appreciates the importance of European cultures for the understanding of the roots of America's liberal traditions (1–31).

were not ready-made human dispositions put into use when they were seen to serve the interests of warmaking states; they were cultivated and realized *in time*. Western freedom and reason can only be comprehended in time. I will also argue that Europeans were exceptionally warlike in a deeply-rooted, energizing and libertarian way rather than unexpectedly under the circumstances of a competitive interstate system.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE 'RISE' OF WESTERN REASON AND FREEDOM

> The ignorant man is not free, because what confronts him is an alien world, something outside him and in the offing, on which he depends, without his having made this foreign world for himself and therefore without being at home in it by himself as in something his own. The impulse of curiosity, the pressure for knowledge, from the lowest level up to the highest rung of philosophical insight arises only from the struggle to cancel this situation of unfreedom and to make the world one's own in one's ideas and thought. Hegel, *Lectures on Fine Art*

> Only the occident knows the state in the modern sense with a professional administration, specialized officialdom, and law based on the concept of citizenship…Only the occident knows rational law, made by jurists and rationally interpreted and applied, and only in the occident is found the concept of citizen (*civis Romanus, citoyen, bourgeois*) because only in the occident again are there cities in the specific sense. Furthermore, only the occident possesses science in the present-day sense of the world. Finally, western civilization is further distinguished from every other by the presence of men with a rational ethic for the conduct of life. Weber, *General Economic History*

The West is more than Wealth and Power

The claim that there were "surprising similarities" between the West and the non-Western world as late as 1800–30, and that the Industrial Revolution was *the one* transformation that set Europe on a different path, is central to the historiography of the revisionists. This revisionist claim is based on the following unspoken premises:

i) The premise that the first and most important preoccupation of human life is adaptation to the environment, and that this must be accomplished by creating technological and economic systems. As Friedrich Engels said in his speech at the grave of Marx: "Mankind must first of all eat, drink, have shelter and clothing, before it can pursue politics, science, religion and art." This premise assigns *ontological* and *causal* priority to the material conditions of social life. It views the role of ideational factors (philosophies, religious beliefs, art) in terms of their "feedback" effects on these conditions.

ii) The anthropological/multicultural premise that no culture is superior – each culture is an adaptive (and therefore rational) solution to its own distinctive environment. Cultures are essentially the shared practices, beliefs, and norms that humans create as a way of coping with their environments and making sense of their relations with one another. Each culture has its own standards of truth and valuation. The intellectual history of the West is devoid of any meaningful long-term pattern.

The devaluation of the intellectual achievements of Western civilization is the most objectionable consequence of these two premises. Multicultural revisionists know that advanced civilizations like Qing China, Tokugawa Japan, and Modern Europe possessed their own religions, philosophies, and customs. They insist, however, that those cultural traits long believed to have existed "only in the West" have turned out "either to be found in non-Western civilizations too or to have no clear causal connection to its innovations in constitutions and production processes that were the key elements in creating Western modernity" (Goldstone 2000: 500). Apparently there was nothing historically distinctive about Western European culture that could account for its ascendancy.

In this chapter, I shall begin by clarifying that most of the resemblances revisionist scholars have found between the West and other advanced civilizations are economic in character, whereas most of the cultural traits they have dismissed as having no clear causal link to the development of the West are religious, legal, intellectual, and artistic in character. It is not that these authors have failed to draw clear distinctions between material and non-material factors, or that they have all agreed on the "significant" economic similarities and the "insignificant" cultural differences. Instead, they reject the idea that the rise of the West amounts to a cultural history that is without equal in any other civilization as based simply on the strength of evidence showing that Europe before the 1800s was no more advanced economically than the more developed civilizations of Asia. Insofar as modern Europe was similar to Asia in its global market relations, technology and productivity, per capita income, and Malthusian pressures, there was nothing unique about Western cultural history that demarcated it from the rest of the world. What were once thought to be major signposts of the West's divergence from the 'rest' – the invention of civic and personal freedom in ancient Athens, the medieval Papal revolution and its legal system of canon law, the principle of individual interpretation of revealed truth, and the Declaration of the

Rights of Man – are either ignored or (de)evaluated only in terms of their measurable impact on economic innovation and growth. If Goldstone recognizes, for example, that Renaissance perspective painting had no historical counterparts in the non-Western world, he concludes that this "hardly suffices to demonstrate that this unique element is connected to European superiority," since Renaissance art had no more direct impact on the Industrial Revolution "than Roman baths" (2000: 506). The once celebrated world of the humanists – "men can do all things if they will," affirmed Leon Battista Alberti[1] – has thus been relegated to a minor cultural event that simply failed to take Europe's pre-industrial economy in a direction different from the non-European world. If Frank realizes that Galilean and Newtonian science were cultivated first in Europe, he placidly brushes aside this science with the observation that it "did not really contribute to the development of technology and industry at all until two centuries after the famed scientific revolution of the 16th century" (1998: 190, 325–6).

Regrettably, the divergence thesis has been reduced to a specialized debate over the origins of the Industrial Revolution. Why was Europe the first continent to employ steam engines? When did Europe/England start to circumvent the Malthusian limitations of an economy based on organic sources of energy? Wallerstein, it is true, has argued that the Industrial Revolution was simply one phase in the evolutionary process of the really novel world economy of the 16th century (1989). I would draw attention, nevertheless, to his focus on the *economic* creation of a European-dominated division of labor. This is also true of Mielants (2007), although he traces what was "exceptional to Europe" to the rise of a new type of trade engendered by merchant-controlled cities during medieval times.

This brings me to a third, all-pervading premise – one taken for granted by both revisionists and their critics:

iii) The rise of the West is a debate about "the ascent of the Western European powers to global hegemony". Europe was different insomuch as it was the first continent to make a "breakthrough" to capitalist imperial domination. The divergence is about "the causes

[1] Leon Battista tried to excel at everything including, gymnastics, riding wild horses, musical compositions, the study of civil and canonical law (until "exhaustion brought on a severe illness"), physics and mathematics, architecture, Latin prose, and writing treatises on moral, philosophical and historical subjects (Burckhardt 1958: 149–50).

> that facilitated the European passage to colonial domination and capitalist modernity."

These words are taken from Joseph Bryant's essay "The West and the Rest Revisited: Debating Capitalist Origins, European Colonialism, and the Advent of Modernity" (2006: 403). In this essay, and in a subsequent essay (2008) in which he defends his views against commentaries from Goldstone and Rosaire Langlois (2008), he challenges revisionist scholarship for reducing the divergence to "fortuitous accidents of geology and geography" and for implying that "a history of the short term or episodic is all that is required" to comprehend the divergence. He insists on "the importance of long-term, path-dependent historical processes…and the immense complexities of macro-structural transformations" (2008: 165). He even questions the claim that Europe's industrial enrichment was heavily indebted to the extraction of colonial resources. Yet, ultimately, Bryant believes that "the establishment of Western domination and exploitation" and the origins of modern growth are the issues that matter in the understanding of Western uniqueness and modernity. While he is not indifferent to Europe's liberal institutions, legal-juridical arrangements, technological skills, and modern scientific outlook, he emphasizes these only in the degree to which they "bore directly and indirectly upon the growing capacity of the European powers to establish coercive relations of dominance over much of the globe" (2008: 150; for similarly worded passages see 2006: 407, 410).

The same can be said of Peer Vries (2003, 2008). Much as Vries downplays the importance of colonial windfalls in favor of long-term differences in institutions, he frames the entire debate in terms of Europe's take-off into sustained *economic* growth. His disagreement with the revisionists ultimately comes down to the greater emphasis he places on the role of state violence and mercantile protectionism in Europe. Bryant and Vries do not spend their time condemning Europeans. They attempt to remain impartial in their attention to the empirical and methodological merits of the respective arguments. Still, like the revisionists, they fail to consider Europe's uniqueness apart from its global ascendency. This is equally true of traditional Eurocentrics.[2] Academics are fascinated by power and wealth.

[2] To the degree that Vries and Bryant connect the internal institutions of Europe to her imperial successes they avoid the dreaded Eurocentric label. Indeed, it is almost

The subject of Jones's "miracle" is "why did economic growth and development begin in Europe" (2003: xvii)? The question Diamond asks is why Europeans came to dominate the rest of the world with their guns, germs, and steel. The subject Parker investigates is how the military revolution "allowed the West to… expand to global dominance (1995: 175). The research Mokyr advances is on the links of the industrial enlightenment to modern growth. Even Landes says that culture made "all the difference" in response to why Europe invented "the very notion of *economic* development" (1998: 32).[3]

The term "rise of the West," admittedly, tends to denote "rise to global power" or to modern growth. The origins of the Industrial Revolution and Europe's dominance are extremely important questions.

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mandatory to take shots at Landes as the "Other" whose way of thinking must be avoided in academia. Bryant accuses him of looking at Europe's rise "within a framing narrative of unabashed boosterism for the liberal capitalist order, openly celebratory of 'free enterprise' and the virtues of 'rugged individualism' " (2006: 413–4). This is distinctively unfair; for example, Landes's *Wealth and Poverty of Nations* actually emphasizes the critical role of governments in promoting infrastructural and educational projects in France and Germany. One may also ask the following: 'What about Bryant's framing narrative of unabashed Marxism?' At one point, Bryant acknowledges that revisionists "are willing, even eager to grant that the early modern Europeans did surpass their co-inhabitants of the globe in one particular capacity: that of effective armed violence" (435). As I pointed out in chapter 4, yes, they are willing to integrate a Marxist take on Europe's long term institutional history with a Marxist take on Europe's short term imperialist windfalls. This is what Vries's "constructive" dialogue with the revisionists is about. He is always careful to remind revisionists that he is not out to "reinstall traditional Eurocentrism" (2008: 6–49).

[3] Landes's singular focus on science and innovation may explain why he endorses the so-called "Black Legend" of 16th century Spain as a land of "intolerance, superstition, and ignorance." There is no denying that Spain was left behind in the main by the "protestant" nations of Europe. But too many economic historians forget that Spain was possibly the most educated country of Europe. The number of new universities built during this era, in the famed tradition of medieval Salamanca, is truly remarkable: Singuenza (1472), Sargossa (1474), Avila (1482), Barcelona (1491, Valencia (1500), Santiago (1504), Seville (1516), Toledo (1520), Granada (1526), Lucena (1533), Sahagun (1534), Granada (1537), Orihuela (1568), Tarragona (1572). This period has been called "El Siglo del Oro" for good reasons; it was the age of El Greco, Velasquez, Calderon de la Barca, and Francisco Lopez de Gomara; the time of Cervantes's *Don Quijote* and the realist transformation of the chivalrous imagination, as well as of Lope de Vega and the creation of a new literary style in the picaresque novel with its sympathetic story of thieves and vagabonds. Even in the realm of science, Spain became the chief market in the world for astronomical instruments, and her expertise in tropical medicine, navigation, mineralogy, metallurgy and mining were highly regarded around the world (Davies 1964; Kamen 2005). The number of deaths during the Inquisition has been vastly exaggerated; according to one recent estimate there were 1000 executions between 1530–1630, and 250 between 1630–1730 (Monter 2003: 53).

Scholars have debated them for the last 200 years. Revisionists deserve praise for challenging the idea that, before the Industrial Revolution proper, Europeans alone were able to enjoy episodes of intensive growth or increases in per capita output and income together with increases in population, whereas non-Europeans were generally able to achieve only extensive growth or increases in the rate of total output. Sung China (960–1275), Tokugawa Japan (1600–1868), and early Qing China (1650–1800) did experience proto-industrialization, rising productivity, population growth, imperial expansion, and urbanization. They also deserve much credit for framing the debate in terms of global comparisons and connections.

What is missing from the entire debate is a consideration of the degree to which Western history saw a successive sequence of divergences in all dimensions of life. The rise of modern *theoretical* science by itself constitutes a divergence. The importance of Newtonian science should not be limited to its subsequent application to generate "the runaway dynamism that has been the hallmark of economic modernity" (Elvin 2008: 171). The question should also be: why did Tuscany rather than Cairo give birth to a thinker like Galileo who would write that the truth of nature "is written in mathematical language, and the letters are triangles, circles and other geometrical figures" (Collingwood 1960: 102)? Why did European scientists come to accept a heliocentric vision and the earth as a planet spinning through space, whereas all the peoples of the world never envisioned the earth other than at the center of their respective universes? Medieval Islamic astronomers were undoubtedly hard at work improving Ptolemy's geocentric system, eliminating its inconsistencies, but they never put together a cohesive heliocentric model. It was Copernicus who broke with the teachings of Aristotelian physics by attributing three motions to the earth, the earth's diurnal rotation on its axis, the earth's rotation around the sun, and the oscillation of the earth's axis. Why Copernicus' hypothetical ideas were immediately picked up, debated, and tested across Europe? Why did the Danish Tycho Brahe (1546–1601) carry out systematic astronomical observations in the course of which he discovered a new star in 1573 and superlunary comets, thus challenging the idea that comets and meteors were atmospheric phenomena and that the heavens were perfect and unchangeable? These are not rhetorical questions. Why did the German Kepler (1571–1630) take on Brahe's challenges to heart, convinced as he was that, with the dissolution of the Aristotelian idea of heavenly motion, a new explanation had to be found for the

motion of planets? How far would Kepler have gone in his formulation that planets have elliptical (rather than circular) orbits without William Gilbert (1540–1603) and his idea that bodies in the solar system mutually influence each other's motions through the interaction of their magnetic forces? What about Galileo's inclined experiments showing that spherical bodies did not move in uniform velocity but received an increment of speed proportional to the square of the time, including his estimation that spherical bodies move across a horizontal plane with uniform speed, which postulated the principle of inertia? Why were his ideas soon fused together with Kepler's three laws of motion, Christian Huygens' (1629–95) concept of centrifugal force, Descartes' algebraic geometry, Robert Hooke's (1635–1703) inverse square law of gravitational attraction, creating a unified cosmic system wherein the gravity of the sun was seen as the force bending into an ellipse the naturally uniform motion of the planets? In short, why did Europeans discover so many successive truths about the natural (Mason 1967; Toulmin and Goodfield 1961)?

I shall try to offer reasons for the higher intellectual and artistic creativity of the West in the next chapter. Here I want to emphasize the development of freedom and reason. The origin of an economy characterized by accelerating rates of productivity barely captures Western modernization. There were periods of modernization and intensive growth in the Asian world. While one could argue that the Industrial Revolution would have eventually occurred independently in Japan or China (Landes: 368; Sanderson 1995b: 174), the same could not be said for the creation of a liberal democratic culture. The rise of this culture cannot be abstracted from the special developmental history of the Greek and Roman assemblies of citizens; the parliaments, municipal communes, universities, and estates of the medieval era; the reading societies, salons, journals and newspapers of the Enlightenment; the political parties, trade unions, and nationalist groups of the 19th century. Modernization is not westernization. The Meiji oligarchy may have founded the modern Japanese state in 1867, but it also sought to preserve the ancient Shinto and samurai culture from the "soulless" modernity of the West. The Prussian-German state in the Bismarckian and Nazi periods created a social order that served the interests of modern industrial capitalism, yet, at the same time, bolstered the social and political status of the old aristocratic military classes and cultivated the anti-Enlightenment notion of an organic nation rooted in blood and soil. At the heart of Western modernity – and here I am

suggesting that "the West" is a cultural term without fixed geographical and ethnic boundaries – is the ideal of freedom, and the ideal of a critical, self-reflexive public culture. A culture is modern and Western when it has a conception of itself as self-grounding or self legitimating, and when individuals are free to articulate their ideas and their feelings through the exercise of their own faculties. The *Other* of this ideal is what Immanuel Kant called "dogmatism;" that is, the acceptance of norms and principles as "self-evident," whether by "God" or by "Nature," *without* the exercise of self-determining reason (Pippin 1997). There is more to a modern agent in Western culture than a highly efficient producer who performs specialized roles based on effort and merit according to universally calculable rules. A self-directing person cannot accept any set of norms, aesthetic conventions, or institutional practices, unless those norms and laws can be seen to be compatible with the free exercise of their reason.

Hegel, whom we shall be discussing briefly below and more extensively in the next chapter, believed that by the early 1800s Europeans had come to the collective realization that a people's cultural identity could not be accepted on the "positive" strength of the authorities of the past but require political conditions in which they could be said to be free. Europeans had come to the realization that humans were free when the reasons for which they acted were those they could count as their own freely articulated reasons (Pinkard 2000). This is why they abolished monarchical governments and aristocratic privileges – to create public institutions that recognized and protected the rights of individuals to self-expression, including freedom of speech, religious dissent, and representative bodies. This was a new "modern" ethos that also came to encourage citizens to show understanding and appreciation of other peoples' cultures while challenging them to revise/reform those values that were seem to be incompatible with the ideal of self-determination.

There are other strands and pressures in the process of modernization that conflict with this ideal of freedom. It has been a common complaint that a bureaucratic way of life empties life of its individual texture, depth, and meaning; that markets generate unequal relations of power inconsistent with the ideals of genuine political participation and self-rule; that the instrumental rationality of scientists generates a drive to dominate nature. It would be extremely one-sided, however, to focus only on these undoubtedly negative facets of Western modernity.

This way of looking at things obscures the deep connections that exist between these negative aspects and the ideals of freedom and reasonableness. A Western scientist is not simply or minimally motivated by a drive to master nature and increase productivity, but is also a person who believes that it is possible to augment one's knowledge of the natural world within a community of open inquiry and independent verification. If nature is something we can explore and understand, then we have elevated the rational abilities of humans; we are no longer on a par with the natural world, we are free to employ our capacities to see into nature's workings and make use of its powers. Nature on its own is mute. It reveals itself only through the experimental activity of reason.

I will examine below in more detail the historical meaning of this Western ideal of modernity. The last two or three decades have yielded a critical set of literary works on the historical evolution of the modern ideals of Western civilization. Among the many philosophical and sociological sources I have relied upon are Charles Taylor's *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (1989), Orlando Patterson's *Freedom in the Making of Western Culture* (1991); Jurgen Habermas's *The Theory of Communicative Action*, *Reason and the Rationalization of Society, Vol. 1* (1984); Jerome Schneewind's *The Invention of Autonomy: A History of Modern Moral Philosophy* (1998), and Terry Pinkard's *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason* (1994). These works, and others to be listed later, are invariably ignored by all the participants in this debate. The sources examined and criticized are mainly about the economic and imperial history of Europe.

The Cultural Poverty of the Revisionists

Pomeranz thinks he is justified using Jones's *European Miracle* as "a point of departure" for his critique of Eurocentrism on the grounds that this book, published in 1981, "comes closest to enunciating the current 'mainstream' position" (31). The other "Europe-centered approaches" he mentions (which contend that Western Europe was "uniquely capable of generating an industrial transformation") are few enough to be listed in less than two lines: Brenner (1976), Jacob (1988), Landes (1969), North and Thomas (1973), Mokyr (1990), Parker

(1988), and Weber (1958).[4] These sources are barely discussed. Mokyr is actually used by Pomeranz (stretched to the point of misinterpretation) to buttress his own argument that Europe generated few "macro" technological inventions during the entire period from 1500 to 1830. Pomeranz does acknowledge Jacob's thesis that a "scientific culture," characterized by increased literacy, private academies, travelling lecturers, and so on, was a peculiar feature of English society "in the 150 years before 1750," but he quickly dismisses the relevance of this culture with the flippant remark that science and mathematics were also flourishing in 17th century China (44, 47, 67). It is also the case that these sources tend to regard the cultural aspects of modernity in terms of the functional requirements of the state and the economy, including Jacob's *The Cultural Meaning of the Scientific Revolution*, which seeks to explain the cultural origins *of* the first Industrial Revolution, rather than the significance of England's scientific culture in its own right. Pomeranz thus feels justified belittling the uniqueness of this culture once he shows, to his satisfaction, that England was not ahead in overall economic productivity in 1750/1800.

Blaut, for his part, concentrates on the works of "eight Eurocentric historians" and insists that these works – by Weber, White, Brenner, Jones, Mann, Hall, Diamond, and Landes – "provide almost the entire spectrum of Eurocentric arguments that are being widely used today" (2000: 16). At the same time, there are serious reasons to question the completeness of this list. First, this book is just over 200 pages long. Second, only two sources from this list of authors were published after 1990, both of which view the rise of the West in strictly economic and ecological terms. Third, the chapter on Weber, which is just 10 pages long, is filled with simplifications and long-questioned distortions of Weber's theory of rationalization. And fourth, Blaut himself believes that these eight scholars offer very similar arguments (each apparently influenced by Weber) and does not hesitate to dismiss most of the "similar" arguments with flat assertions such as "not true," "not so," "absolutely untrue," and "nonsense."

To his credit, Frank offers a richer, more diverse appreciation of Eurocentric sources and, instead of seeing them as mere variations within a Weberian tradition, recognizes the distinctive contributions

[4] The many other articles Pomeranz cites relate to the specifics of the industrial revolution rather than the rise of the West.

of Marxists (Anderson, Dobb, Hilton, Brenner), of neo-classical economic historians (Rostow, Cipolla, White, Jones, North and Thomas, Rosenberg and Bridzell, Mokyr, O'Brien), and of Weberians (Landes, Baechler, Hall and Mann). But diverse as this list is, it contains only sources that interpret and understand the origins of Western modernity as if it were only about the "great transformation" from traditional agrarian society to modern industrial society. It is not that these sources ignore the cultural aspects of modernity. It is that such institutional aspects of the medieval era, for example, as the corporate liberties and immunities enjoyed by feudal landowners, cities, guilds, and universities, are not examined in terms of their own worthiness as moral ideals but only in reference to their causal contributions to modern economic growth.

Frank briefly debates Floris Cohen's *The Scientific Revolution: A Historiographical Inquiry* (1994), which seriously addresses the revolutionary character of early modern science, its open method of experimental observation, and its algebraic treatment of natural phenomena; but, as I pointed out earlier, Frank pays little attention to the many insightful analyses contained in this 662-page work, and instead declares bluntly that the rise of Galilean and Newtonian science is irrelevant to this debate on the unsupported grounds that it "did not really contribute to the development of technology and industry at all" before the middle of the 19th century. Frank also claims that Newtonian science was not peculiar to Europe but "existed and continued to develop elsewhere as well" (1998: 188–9).[5]

Vries (2005) thinks that Goldstone is unlike other revisionists in arguing that England was the beneficiary of "a peculiar engine-based scientific culture." The truth is that Goldstone pays attention only to those cultural items that can be shown to have brought about an economic outcome. England's culture matters to him only in the degree to

[5] Landes appears to agree with Frank on this question when he states that "science was not initially a major contributor to the European Industrial Revolution, which built largely on empirical advances by practitioners" (1998: 343). Landes did believe early on in his career that Britain's technological advances were brought on by "practical tinkerers". Later, however, he came to accept the research findings of Musson and Robinson, writing in *Unbound Prometheus* (1969: 63) of the "striking…theoretical knowledge" of English inventors; these "were not the unlettered tinkerers of historical mythology. Even the ordinary millwright, as Fairbairn notes, was usually a 'fair arithmetician, knew something of geometry…He could calculate the velocities, strength, and power of machines: could draw in plan and section…' "

which it permitted this lone island to diverge *economically* from what was otherwise a parallel pattern of political, demographic, commercial, urban, and theoretical science across the major civilizations of the world, "all the way from 1000 and 1800" (2002). He pays no attention to England's liberal culture, freedom of the press, religious toleration, and representative institutions. This is unfortunate since no idea resonated more strongly in the minds of Britons in the 18th century than liberty. To some degree, as I argued in the previous chapter, Goldstone makes light of this 'engine culture' when he insists that there were "multiple" scientific modernities going on in the rest of the world.

While Goldstone is more in tune with current Eurocentric sources, and includes in his bibliographies important works by Crosby, Gellner, Macfarlane, Parker, Lal, Mokyr, and Levine, he hardly engages any of these sources; he integrates them into his argument that every one of the economic trends (widespread domestic and international trade, growth in per capita income, political centralization and secularization, nation-based citizenship, and constitutional government) observed in Europe and labeled as "early modern" by Eurocentric scholars, "are also widely evident outside of Europe prior to the 18th century, in China, Japan, Southeast Asia, India, and the Ottoman Empire" (2002b: 330). The reader, however, will look in vain for any attempt on Goldstone's part to analyze Eastern experiences in citizenship, constitutional government, and secularism. His focus is exclusively on the economic similarities between East and West prior to Britain's steam-powered growth after 1830.

The one instance Goldstone concedes that Europe may have been doing something "different from other civilizations" is when he agrees, in a review essay of Alfred Crosby's *Measure of Reality*: *Quantification and Western Society, 1250–1600*, that during late medieval and Renaissance times, "Europeans developed an obsessive fascination with subjecting their world to uniform measurement, dividing everything into greater or fewer uniform units." But even this observation is immediately countered with the claim that this fascination was not too relevant to the rise of a "merchant culture," since there were merchants in the Middle East, India, and China who "were just as attentive to accounts and profits, just as concerned about measuring their wares, as their Europeans counterparts" (2000: 502–5). More importantly, he argues that, even if Crosby is correct that Europeans were more preoccupied with subjecting everything to quantification, it does not follow that they were "fated" to achieve economic superiority centuries later.

He asks: how else do we address the fact that Renaissance Italy, the center of this culture, lost its economic leadership in the 16th century?

Goldstone is able to mount this challenge, I would argue, because Crosby himself defines this new mentality in terms of its contribution to "the success of European imperialism," and not in terms of its contribution to freedom and reason. It wasn't simply that the West was unique in its enthusiasm for mechanical clocks, as Crosby says; it was also a time when it was increasingly seen as open-ended and linear rather than cyclical, as a resource that could be treasured and not wasted, as an opportunity to acquire new truths, new ideas and experiences. Europeans were coming to see their own time, the Renaissance, as a new epoch that had grown in knowledge and was "older and thus wiser than antiquity" (Bouwsma 2002: 65). It wasn't merely that new quantitative ideas made possible new projected maps of the globe whereby "sailors could plot compass courses as straight lines," or that Europeans cultivated a new homogeneous conception of space "without center or edge, top or bottom" (1997: 237, 105). It was also that Mercator's Atlas, and the circumnavigation of the earth, gave Europe, in the words of William Bouswma, "a sense of its own spatial identity in a larger world" and "a new, potentially humbler, perspective on itself and its place in the world" (73).

The medieval culture that saw the universe as a finite and ordered unity in which the earth – although material and imperfect – was central, gave way to a whole new outlook in which the universe was now revealed as infinitely large, and humanity was seen as free from any fixed or static place in the chain of being, which had previously placed it between the heavens above and the animals and plants below (Taylor 1989: 115–42). The "measure of reality" signaled a new, paradoxical conception of our place in space, in which Europeans, having noted the variety in religions, legal systems, and customs in the globe, saw the non- European world as "a mirror in which to examine the blemishes of Europe." "We exclaim at the invention of our artillery," said Montaigne, "of our printing; other men in another corner of the world, in China, enjoyed these a thousand years earlier" (1958: 73).[6]

[6] Michel de Montaigne famously condemned Spanish actions in the Americas at the same time that he praised the "astonishing magnificence of the cities of Cuzco and Mexico," "the hardiness and courage" of its inhabitants; see Michel de Montaigne (1958: 276–9). But the interest and desire to learn from other cultures, and even the willingness to question the identification of the "best" and the "good" with one's

But it was also a space in which the cosmos was no longer seen as the embodiment of a preordained order that defined the good for humanity; rather, a new conception of the good was emerging in terms of directing human agency which contained within its own nature the possibility of the most varied intellectual development. The *Oration on the Dignity of Man* by Pico della Mirandola (1462–94) thus meditates that human beings alone have no "archetype" to exemplify. Everything else in nature has a determinate possibility, but it is man's nature to be able to choose his own nature: "To thee alone is given a growth and a development depending on thine own free will" (in Burckhardt 1958: 352).

When we come to Goody's *East in the West* (1996), and his more recent book, *The Theft of History* (2006), it seems that we are dealing with two books that, even if they rely on very few Eurocentric sources published after 1970, do look at the cultural differences between East and West without reducing them to their economic roles.[7] Goody takes on directly Weber's long-term explanation of the genesis of Western rationalism. We all know, of course, that Weber's developmental history was an attempt to understand the special forms of rationality that enabled the West to take the lead in economic development. What differentiates Goody is that he at least recognizes, if implicitly, that Weber's account is also, as he puts it, about "intellectual developments seen as associated with the modern world" (1996: 11). Weber's history of the specific rationality of Western capitalism is part of a general explanation that examines other cultural attributes, the method of syllogistic reasoning and the development of a "rational

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own culture, is a Western tradition that goes back to the Greeks and Herodotus. What was new about Montaigne, according to Jerome Schneewind (a Kantian scholar we will encounter later on) was that "he was the first to explore fully the consequences for daily life of the loss of publicly acknowledged moral authority in a religiously divided world." "He thought that there was not much point in arguing about the highest good…We must each answer the question about the highest good for ourselves" (1998: 44–5, 57).

[7] The sources published after 1970 mentioned in *East in the West* are: Anderson (1975), Brenner (1976), Collins (1986), Eisenstein (1979), Hall (1985), Macfarlane (1978). In *Theft of History* Goody writes in the "Introduction" that "the situation regarding global history has greatly changed since I first approached this theme," after which he then lists books by Pomeranz, Frank, Hobson, and Fernandez-Armesto (7–8). He does not list a single critical assessment of these books, but instead goes on to challenge the "Eurocentric" approaches of Needham, Moses Finley, Anderson, and Braudel, without listing in the bibliography a single source published after the 1980s except Landes's *Wealth and Poverty of Nations*!

proof in geometry," the formulation and use of "rational concepts in historical scholarship and jurisprudence," capital accounting and double-entry bookkeeping. While it is true that double-entry accounting is connected to Weber's explanation of the development of industrial capitalism, Goody pays enough attention to Weber's central concept of "Western rationalism" in its own right, even posing the question whether this rationality itself was a specific achievement of Western culture.

Nevertheless, despite Goody's engagement with Weber's ideas, and his own consideration of "Antiquity, Feudalism and the Renaissance," he looks at this long history primarily in terms of when the "the *domination* of the world by Europe" started (2006: 286). He continually warns against "searching back in history" for European uniqueness, on the unexamined grounds that it "almost inevitably invites a teleological bias" (305), and results in "a narrative of dubious progressive changes" (6). The divergence was only a "temporary" occurrence brought on by "the *industrialization* of the nineteenth century" (286).

We also encounter in Goody a superficial reading of Weber. He misconstrues Weber's concept of "Western rationalism," as if it were a binary concept set up in opposition to Eastern "irrationalism." Let me explain. Weber made a distinction, in his comparative study of civilizations, between four types of rationality, namely, value (or "substantive") rationality, theoretical rationality, practical rationality, and formal rationality. These four types of rationality were not limited to the West but were found in all civilizations. *Substantive* rationality refers to actions guided by a belief in the intrinsic value of some aesthetic, religious, or ethical idea independently of its chances of success. *Theoretical* rationality refers to a type of reasoning that intellectuals use when they seek to find (religious, ethical, or logical) meaning in the chaotic/random events of everyday sensory life, and to find symmetry, consistency, or purpose in the world. Both *practical* and *formal* rationalities involve calculation of alternate means to a given end, but when such calculation/action is performed in reference to pragmatic self-interests, Weber calls it "practical rational action," and when it is done in reference to universally applied rules, laws or regulations (that is, when practical rational action is "rationalized"), he calls it "formal rational action" (Kalberg 1980; 1994).

Goody, on the other hand, employs a general, indeterminate definition of rationality, as the basis from which he then evaluates syllogistic reasoning, double-entry bookkeeping, and mercantile/industrial/

technological activities, although these are in fact instances of different types of rationality: theoretical, formal, and practical, respectively. He thinks he has proven Weber wrong simply by pointing out that these types of rationality were found in all advanced civilizations. East and West, Goody says, were not "two kinds of society," modern and traditional, logical and illogical, naturalistic and magical.

However, it was not Weber but modernization theorists who used polar ideal-type concepts, such as "particularism" versus "universalism," "ascription" versus "achievement," "collectivism" versus "individualism," to construct models of "Asian/African" and "Western" societies, without analyzing concrete historical societies.[8]

The Cultural Richness of Max Weber

Critics of revisionists, too, have either misunderstood or neglected Weber's ideas on Western uniqueness. Vries, for example, makes the common mistake of judging Weber in terms when and why Europe was able to escape from Malthusian constraints; from which point he then dismisses him for presuming that the West was from the beginning "ideally suited to produce science, technology and a methodological living" (2008: 6–49). He thinks that Weber looked back to ancient Greece in search of the seeds that eventually culminated in the Industrial Revolution. We are made to believe that, for Weber, the West was "naturally" predisposed for the eventual coming of modernity. The East was "naturally" predisposed to stagnate, and its history (for Weber) was "of no fundamental relevance" in the understanding of "the main direction of modern Western history" (2008). Without ever citing a

[8] For examples of these bipolar models contrasting "traditional" and "modern" societies, see Sztomka (1994). The revisionists have embraced Goody's critique of Weber as having (to quote Parthasarathi 2002) "dismantled long-standing assumptions about the uniqueness of European rationality." Findley and O'Rourke (2007: 354) also refer to Goody's "devastating critique" of Weber. In truth, I have yet to see a serious consideration of Weber in revisionist writings, apart from Blaut's hatched job and Goody's simplicities, to which I shall return below. For a rebuttal of Goody's book, *Capitalism and Modernity: The Great Debate* (2004) and its claim that there were no substantive cultural differences between East and West, see Bryant (2006), who correctly points out that Goody's arguments are devoid of analytical substance and historical context. He may be "one of the world's most distinguished anthropologists," but his work on this debate consists of mere assertions along the lines of: there were "democratic regimes in the East," there were "despotic rulers in the West," there were "rational enterprises in Asia."

single item from Weber, Vries blissfully concludes that "there was nothing wrong with their [China's] rationality, work ethos, business acumen, love of profit, practical sense, or materialism" (2003: 35).

This is a major misinterpretation, starting with the obvious fact that Weber was the first historian to dedicate his life to the comparative study of the East and the West. But let me first insist that Weber was not trying to explain the origins of the Industrial Revolution or Europe's global ascendency. These were to him subsidiary developments amongst a wide range of other developments, all of which revolved around the distinctive (empirically ascertained) presence in the West of a *higher* degree of rationalization. He never contrasted Western rationalism to Eastern irrationalism. He recognized that:

> Empirical knowledge, reflection on the world…philosophical and theological wisdom of the deepest kind, extraordinarily refined knowledge and observation – all this has existed outside the West, above all in India, China, Babylon, and Egypt (2002: 149).

What drew Weber's attention was Europe's continuous sequence of surprising differences: why it was that "a fully developed systematic theology appeared only in Hellenic-influenced Christianity"? Why Babylonia's empirical astronomy "lacked a mathematical foundation"? Why "the idea of rational 'proof' was absent from geometry in India? "Although the natural sciences in India were quite well developed…they lacked the rational experiment." The "scholarly writing of history in China" was very advanced, but it "lacked the rigor of Thucydides."

The well-known 'Prefatory Remarks' which Weber wrote in 1920, from which I am taking these observations,[9] enumerate many other contrasting features, none of which were presumed to exist from the beginning:

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[9] I am citing these words from Kalberg's new translation of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. These words come specifically from Weber's 'Prefatory Remarks' to his Collected Essays in the Sociology of Religion (1920), which have been traditionally used as a preface to *The Protestant Ethic*, but which Kalberg includes in his own translation as an "afterthought" originally published in 1920. *The Protestant Ethic* itself was originally published in 1904–05 in two parts in a social science journal, and later revised in 1920 when Weber prepared it for publication in his three volume series, *Collected Essays in Sociology*, to which he added the 'Prefatory Remarks'. When Weber writes of "non-rational forms of capitalism" in China and India in his *General Economic History* (1981: 334) he means "non-modern rational" forms. Weber also speaks of "non-rational" capitalism in reference to pre-modern, pre-industrial forms of capitalism in Europe, insofar as these forms were not yet formally rational.

> "Precursors of Machiavelli existed in India, yet all Asian theorizing on the state omitted a systematic approach comparable to Aristotle's… A rational jurisprudence based on rigorous juridical models and modes of thinking of the type found in Roman law…was absent outside the West, despite all beginnings in India, and the comprehensive codification of law in the Near East especially – and in spite of all the books on law written in India and elsewhere" (150).

He saw similar differentiating patterns in art. While "all of the West's rational tone intervals were also widely calculated and known elsewhere," Western music was unique in its counterpoint and harmony, formation of tone and "the understanding of chromatics and enharmonics since the Renaissance in rational form." The orchestra, the organ, the piano, and violin, together with ensembles of wind instruments, the string quartet, the system of musical notation, sonatas, symphonies, and operas, were all unique to Europe. He saw the same divergent traits in architecture, painting, printing and higher learning. There was printing in China but not a printed literature "intended only to be printed and made exclusively for printing" (no daily newspapers and periodicals). There were universities in China and the Islamic world but no "rational and systematic" organization of scientific disciplines taught by "specialized professionals" (151). The "rational use of both linear and spatial perspective" was lacking as well outside the West.

These were not deductively generated contrasts; they were observations attested historically by the founder, and still its greatest representative, of comparative history. Weber dedicated his life to the question why Western history exhibited a *higher* (and, therefore, unique) process of rationalization. The allegation that Weber saw "the rest as of no fundamental relevance" takes no notice of his entire body of work, his celebrated studies on the agrarian sociology of ancient civilizations, of the religions of India, ancient Israel, and China, and of the "economy and society" of numerous cultures.

Weber's basic thesis may be summed up as follows: the West exhibited a "peculiar" trajectory in the *higher* degree to which social activities involving the calculation of alternate means to a given end were rationalized, and in the higher degree to which *theoretical* beliefs about the nature of the universe, life, and God were rationalized through the use of definitions, theorems, and concepts. Among the many areas of social life where means-end actions were rationalized, he emphasised the economy and the state. While Weber fully recognized that all

cultures were highly *pragmatic* in the pursuit of the best means to attain a given end, and that in "all civilized countries of the earth" there existed a "considerable rationalization of capitalistic calculation," he thought that in the Occident economic actions had been rationalized to a *higher degree* (1958: 13–26). Some of these rationalizations, in the area of economic life, involved the creation of joint liability, double-entry bookkeeping, the separation of business and personal property, the creation of capital assets in the form of private ownership of the means of production, and the rational organization of free wage labour (Weber 1964: 168–280). In the area of law and administration, Weber also recognized that China, in particular, had a relatively centralized, large-scale bureaucratic administration managed by an official class trained through formalized examinations. Nonetheless he noted that this administration was more conditioned by personal and kinship relations, and by a Confucian ideology that promoted a pious conformism to concrete familial and political virtues rather than to abstract formalized categories (Love 2000a).[10] The West carried this rationalization process further through the creation of bureaucracies increasingly managed by specialized and trained officials in accordance with impersonal and universal statuses and regulations formulated and recorded in writing, and the creation of more integrated and codified systems of law (Weber 1981: 338–351).

Weber also detected a "specific and peculiar" Occidental path toward greater theoretical rationalization in such cultural areas as religion and science. The delimitation of the jurisdiction of gods, monotheism and the rise of ethical salvation religions, and the rationalization of values into internally consistent doctrines by a professionally trained priesthood, were early instances of this process (Schluchter 1985). Calvinism

[10] Some have argued that Weber ignored the "transformative and "revolutionary" elements contained in Neo-Confucianism. But Love makes the reasonable counter-argument that the research on Neo-Confucianism, which was produced after Weber, merely qualifies his "broad" emphasis. The Neo-Confucian thought of the Sung era was less about the external observance of ritualistic norms than about the sincere nourishment of "one's spontaneously good feelings," as the sage Chu Hsi put it. The point remains that Neo-Confucianism was calling for a return to the sincerity of ancient Confucianism; and that, moreover, as Mote and Fairbank have observed, this new Confucianism would become (after the late Ming era) part of an even more ritualized and stereotyped social and cultural order (Love 2000a: 179–183). Neo-Confucianism, in the words of Fairbank, "became the living faith of China's elite down to the twentieth century" (1992: 98). The "Confucian ritualism" of Late Imperial is examined by Chow (1994).

took this process further by abandoning the "other–worldly" asceticism of early Christianity (and Hinduism) and promoting instead a "this-worldly" religion that celebrated the rational mastery of the world as an ideal. Weber also appreciated the achievements of Chinese applied science, particularly in the period before 1500, when it was arguably superior to European applied science. John Love thinks that Weber "tends to overstate the debilitating effects of tradition and bureaucracy on the developmental possibilities of Chinese science" (2000a: 184). Needham, not Weber, is the key source on Chinese scientific efforts regarding printing, the magnetic compass, iron-casting, stirrups, segmental-arch bridges, pound-locks on canals, mechanical clockwork, and cartography (Needham 1969). Nevertheless, as Love adds, the work of Needham corroborated Weber's general view that Chinese science remained too practical in its orientation and did not formulate a theoretical outlook which assumed a rational, orderly universe guided by universal laws.

Chinese science did not contain the idea of a natural world governed by laws in the mathematical sense; it spoke neither of the ultimate, constituent elements of nature nor of a law-governed reality underlying the appearances of the senses (Needham 1978: 300). Instead of "elements," Chinese thinkers spoke of "phases" and recurring "cycles," and instead of "causes" they spoke of "correlations" or analogies. It also had no concept of a "cosmos," a single entity called "nature," and it did not employ a deductive method of rigorous demonstration according to which a conclusion, a theorem, was proven by reasoning from a series of self-evident axioms. The natural and the social world, moreover, were closely interrelated and one could examine one to explain the other (McClellan and Dorn 1999: 55–77; 117–140).

It is not necessarily that Greek science in all respects was more advanced than Chinese science. It is that its belief in the underlying regularities of nature, and in the rational capacity of humans to comprehend those regularities, worked out to be of central importance not only to the evolution of modern technology but also to the rational understanding of the laws of nature. Since ancient times, Chinese science had followed a very different epistemic path, and "it seems unlikely" that it would have ever cultivated a mechanistic world view similar to that of 17th century Europe without Western influence. The model of the good philosopher in China remained the Sage who presented himself as the spokesmen of age-old wisdom and exhibited adherence to social norms, without challenging the classical systems of

thought, as much as adding to, commenting on, or redefining existing concepts. The model of the successful Greek philosopher was the one who challenged existing explanations by trying to deliver new and better explanations and by seeking incontrovertible truths based on the strictest modes of demonstration (Lloyd 1996).

Actually, Goody recognizes that to point to "broad similarities" in the development of theoretical reasoning between East and West "is in no way to deny their many differences." The differences, he says, are simply "not so great" as the polar models proposed by modernization theorists seem to suggest. The differences "are matters of degree rather than of kind" (1996: 18). But the differences are important nonetheless. Thus, after making the point that "the synthesisation and formalisation of knowledge were characteristic of all literate societies," Goody admits that syllogistic reasoning "is certainly not universal," since it is absent in societies lacking writing. He then says that "in its most abstract form, in the sense of a well-developed system of logic," this type of reasoning "clearly depends upon the use of an alphabet." Only with the Greek adaptation of the Semitic script, could the grammar of logic, he explains, be "universalised, globalized, by substituting phonetic symbols (letters) for words (semantic symbols)" (18). He also acknowledges as "undoubtedly true" Lloyd's argument in *Demystifying Mentalities* (1990: 8) that the differences between Greek and Chinese theoretical science were "considerable" in "the degree of explicitness and self-consciousness of the inquiries," due to a polemical style of argument and persuasion the Greeks had cultivated in their political assemblies and law courts. This style of discourse taught them how "to engage in self-conscious analysis of the status, methods and foundation of these inquiries" (1996: 242). Finally, Goody accepts Lloyd's conclusion that the notion of exact and explicit concepts of proof in theoretical knowledge was a Greek invention in contrast to ancient Indian geometry, which was more interested in practical results and "show[ed] no direct concern with proof procedures as such at all" – an argument in direct line with Weber's observation that "Indian geometry had no rational proof" (1996: 243; Weber 1958: 13).[11]

[11] For another evaluation of Goody's critique of Eurocentrism, see Dawson (2003; 418–20), where he cites Goody that "it is pointless to speculate about deep, continuing cultural factors, such as individualism, that imply a semi-permanent pre-eminence for the West" and that we should focus instead on what contingent factors "enabled the East to advance at one period and in one sphere and the West at others.". Goody's

Now, it was this rationalized theoretical mentality initiated by the ancient Greeks that blossomed in Western Europe during the late Middle Ages and Renaissance – or so we learn from Crosby (1999) – leading to a new conception of time as a succession of quanta, a homogeneous conception of space, a new cultural style of perspective painting, offering an impression of real depth and a fixed point of view, and a new polyphonic music where sounds could be seen as a phenomena moving through time, written on a paper using a codified and standardized system of notation for all sounds and rests. It was also this mentality that led gradually to the rationalization of means–end practical actions, the formal (sometimes called "instrumental") rationality which Weber studied so well, and which Crosby — indirectly, without using Weberian terms — also saw in geometrically precise maps, in mechanical clocks, and in double-entry bookkeeping.

All cultures must organize their lives in a practical–rational manner as a matter of survival. The capacity of practical reason to satisfy biological and economic needs is fundamentally the same everywhere and transcends individual cultures, for it serves interests that are grounded in the human species. It is insufficient, therefore, to argue, as Goody does, that the Chinese were for many centuries more sophisticated and advanced than Europeans in many cultural areas (technological, economic) that could be adapted to many practical activities. It is not enough either to argue that early modern India and China were highly developed manufacturing countries in which methods of rational accounting (which Goody agrees cannot be described as "full double-entry") were used by merchants, as would be expected of any enterprise, especially large scale trading companies (1996: 78–81).

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comparative method consists indeed of random samplings from one year to the next and one locality to the other without any sense of historical patterns. Dawson also examines the claims of Janet Abu-Lughod (1989), Blaut, and Diamond, but is unaware of the more empirically oriented works of Pomeranz, Wong, Goldstone, and Frank. I will expand on the "semi-permanent" differences of the West later on, here let me just cite what Lloyd himself says elsewhere about the deep scientific difference of the Greeks: "They were certainly not the first to develop a complex mathematics – only the first to use, and then also to give a formal analysis of, a concept of rigorous demonstration. They were not the first to carry out careful observations in astronomy and medicine, only the first – eventually – to develop an explicit notion of empirical research and to debate its role in natural science. They were not the first to diagnose and treat some medical cases without reference to postulated divine or daemonic agencies, only the first to express a category of the 'magical' and to attempt to exclude it from medicine" (Lloyd 1979: 232).

Weber knew that "all civilized countries of the earth" exhibited a "considerable rationalization of capitalistic calculation." But he also drew a distinction between "capitalism" and "modern [European] capitalism" (1958). Capitalism defined as the exchange of goods and calculations of profit, including some degree of "capital accounting," is not the same as "modern capitalism" (Bendix 1977: 52–3). Modern capitalism, as I pointed out above, involves the formal rationalization of the whole sphere of economic life; that is, the systematic rationalization of the entire process of production, distribution, and exchange, including a "modern economic ethos" or "a this-worldly spirit" that provides the motivation for a methodical approach to labor and legitimates the rigorous organization of the workforce according to the rules of efficient management. The creation of a steam-driven factory economy was a revolution in the rationalization of means-end action.

But what we need to realize, as stated earlier, is that Weber's theory is not only about the rise of modern capitalism but most fundamentally about the rise of modern Western rationalism. What made Occidental rationalism different from "Chinese rationalism," the "rationalism of India," and the "rationalism of the ancient Near East" was the fact that only the West saw the formal and theoretical rationalization of multiple areas of social like to a degree not evident in any civilization.

This Occidental path was also characterized by the rise of relatively independent social spheres of action. Weber observed that, as the traditional societies of Europe grew larger and more complex, there was a process of increasing specialization and differentiation of political activity, art, religion, law, science, and economic activity, according to which each of these became autonomously regulated by their own specific norms and worldviews. In his sociology of law, for example, he noted that from the Middle Ages onwards, the law attained certain autonomy from the church and from the political will of kings and clerics. As law was increasingly controlled, taught, and professionalized by specialist jurists, and the internal logic of legal reasoning unfolded, law became ever more self-reflective, and tradition, custom, and religious dogma were progressively eliminated from the application of law in favour of increasingly universalistic principles applied with consistency and with due process (Habermas 1984: 243–271). Rational law, in other words, allowed for the impartial validation of proof through the use of generally applicable rules.

In the sphere of art, science, and ethics, Weber also detected a parallel process of differentiation from religion. As the aesthetic, ethical,

and scientific spheres achieved a degree of institutionalized autonomy, these activities were formalized and taught in schools according to their own methods, axioms, and norms (Brubaker 1984: 61–91). By thus granting to them greater institutional autonomy and greater independence from religion, this differentiation encouraged these orientations to become more consciously a product of rational self-reflection, and much less the revelation of divine scripture and religious precepts. It encouraged them to generate their own formal principles and norms to be applied universally.

Judaism and its Contribution to Western Rationalism

But why did Weber think that Western history was long infused with this "specific and peculiar" form of rationalization? Most scholars take his 'Protestant ethic' thesis in isolation and assume that, for Weber, this religion bore the primary responsibility in the promotion of modern economic action. There is no doubt that Weber saw in Protestantism an all important religious medium for the spirit of modern capitalism; a new type of religion that, in his splendid words:

> …demanded of the believer not celibacy, as in the case of the monk, but the elimination of all erotic pleasure or desire; not poverty, but the elimination of all idle enjoyment of unearned wealth and income, and the avoidance of all feudalistic, life-loving ostentation of wealth; not the ascetic death-in-life of the cloister, but an alert, rationally controlled conduct of life and the avoidance of all surrender to the beauty of the world, to art, to one's own moods and emotions. The clear and uniform goal of this asceticism was the disciplining and methodological organization of conduct (Weber 1968: 556).

This is essentially the argument Jacob advances in her psychological assessment of the 18th century inventor and entrepreneur, James Watt; he embodied the essence of this "methodic conduct of life," as was evident from his "frugality, obsessive saving, caution with regard to frivolity and luxury" (1997: 126). The problem with this singular focus on Protestant rationalization is that it ignores other prior forms of Western rationalization – why the Romans, for example, took the lead in the formulation and use of rational concepts in jurisprudence?

Mann, drawing on Weber's sociology of religion, goes back to the "Christian psyche" and the way it "encouraged a drive for moral and social improvement," in order to explain the unique use of "intensive" animal power and technology in northern Europe after 1000 AD (1988:

12–13). He follows a long line of "Weberian" historians and sociologists who have undeniably contrasted the "rational restlessness" of Christianity – its ideal of salvation in return for disciplined ethical conduct *in this world* – to the "rational acceptance" of the social order by Confucianism, the "irrational" rejection of worldly authority by Taoism, the "mystical acceptance" of social order by Hinduism, and the other-worldly retreat by Buddhism. Mann thus portrays Puritanism as one phase in the process of occidental rationalization, a modern phase that reinforced tendencies already present in Christianity. But Mann never explains what it was about Christianity that imbued it with this "rational restlessness."

Many other historians, not just "Weberians," have maintained that Christianity was the most important cultural "foundation" of the West. The eminent medievalist Lynn White, on whom Mann relies heavily, traces the "unmatched dynamism" and distinctive predilection among medieval Europeans for instrumental tinkering and problem-solving back to the "Christian dogma of man's transcendence of, and rightful mastery over, nature" (White 1982: 90). The notion of transcendence, he argues, cultivated a detached/scientific attitude to nature, while the call to master nature encouraged a practical/technological disposition. Lynn also stresses the Christian idea that humans have a responsibility to work, as part of the fulfillment of the ultimate goal of salvation, and the idea that God is an intelligent being who crafted the world with natural laws, which could be comprehended by rational humans (White 1978a).

More recently, Philippe Nemo (2004: 29–38) has drawn attention to the way Judeo-Christianity brought to the Greco-Roman tradition a unique ethics of love, charity, and compassion. He thinks that this ethic *inspired* Westerners to act in this world against evil and suffering, setting in motion a historical process of moral progression. While the Greek ethics and Roman stoicism held that it was folly to struggle against the destiny of human limitations and the objective realities of the world, Christianity nurtured a feeling that humans could improve themselves and bring about the advent of the Kingdom of God – which was also in contrast to other non-Western religions, which conceived of salvation as something achieved by escaping into the "world behind" or the "world beyond." In the Christian hope for amelioration there was a sense that things could change, that history was not a cycle of time but a "forward-moving" process, a linear movement from Creation to the "end of time" and to the second coming of the Messiah. This

messianic impulse, evident in the Prophets and in the Psalmist writings, gave expression to the "millenarianism" of the Middle Ages, the "utopianism" of Western political thought, and the modern secular belief in economic and scientific progress.

The flaw with these accounts, insomuch as they claim to be "Weberian," is that they ignore Weber's comprehensive theory of rationalization. I make no pretense to being an expert on Weber's thought. Mastering what he says in particular about the rise of the West is a daunting task; his writings on the unique rationalization of the West do not stand as a unified collection but as an assemblage of loosely connected topics on the division of labor, class and status groups, the relation between religious and economic interests, bureaucratization, disenchantment, charismatic leadership, society and religion in India, China and ancient Palestine. If we are to make the most of Weber, not as experts on his sociology per se, but in our effort to understand the rise of the West, we need to bring into play the most pertinent secondary sources. This is not easy; Alan Sica (2000: 49–51) lists close to sixty "valuable treatments" on Weber's concept of rationalization alone, and in another publication (2000b) he includes a 3000-item bibliography of secondary sources on Weber in English! There is a real disconnection between this literature on Weber's ideas per se and the debate on the rise of the West. I have benefited greatly from the sources already cited, including Kalberg's explication of Weber's four types of rationality and Love's up-to-the-date analysis of Weber's views on China. I will draw on additional books and articles below; let me say now that Richard Bendix's classic, *Max Weber, An Intellectual Portrait*, first published in 1960, still stands as the most lucid assessment of Weber's comparative study of the great religions of the world.

In this book, Bendix makes it clear why "ancient Judaism" was a "cornerstone" of Weber's effort "to explain the distinguishing characteristics of Western civilization" (199). It is astonishing that all the participants I have named in this debate are oblivious to Weber's investigations on Judaism and its relationship to rationalism. According to Bendix, Weber contrasted the Asian belief in magic, which "assumed that the whole world is brimful of powers that act in a manner beyond human comprehension," to the presence in ancient Judaism of "a *highly rational* religious ethic of social conduct…free of magic and all forms of irrational quest for salvation" (205). He makes clear how Weber traced the fundamental disposition of Christianity to master and change the world, rather than withdraw from its imperfections, back to

ancient Jewish prophecy. For Weber,[12] "the great contribution of the Biblical prophets was to make the morally correct actions of *everyday life* into a special duty of a people chosen by the mightiest God" (247). Bendix adds that for the prophets "the events of the world were not determined by magic or blind chance but by Yahwe's will" (249). The world is a *meaningful* place and the motives of Yahwe as a ruler of this world are not beyond the ability of the prophets to *comprehend*. "His ability to hear the divine voice was the prophet's self-legitimation, a uniquely personal experience of a burdensome mission" (246).

The central question for the prophets was to explain the *reasons* for all the misfortunes of the day. How could one remain faithful in the promise of Yahwe – the idea of a special covenant with God and the promised dominion over a future land of "milk and honey" – in the face of the singular misfortunes of Yahwe's own people? The early, primitive answer was that God was guided by "His selfish interests and passions." But these views, writes Bendix, "raised the *rationalistic* question of whether this image was compatible with the majesty of a great God." Eventually the response that gained predominance was one that brought a change in Yahwe's "ancient and unconditional pledges into resolutions and promises that *depended upon man's conduct*" (250) in this world.

> The people will prosper *in the here and now*, if they obey His commandments…Yet the observance of particular rules is not the decisive religious demand; other religions demand much the same workday ethic as does Judaism. What matters is that the people have faith in the message inspired by God. This means 'unconditional trust in Yahwe's omnipotence and in the sincerity of His word' out of the conviction that the divine word will be fulfilled 'despite all external probabilities to the contrary' (252).

In prophetic Judaism, the *righteous* are made to feel hopeful that better times will be possible during their lifetime, even in the shadow of impending misfortunes. Bendix summarizes the way in which the rise of the prophetic movement "marked the turning point of Western civilization" (233) as follows:

> Free of magic and esoteric speculations, devoted to the study of law, vigilant in the effort to do 'what was right in the eyes of the Lord' in the hope of a better future, the prophets established a religion of faith that subjected

[12] All the italics in the following cited passages are my own.

> man's daily life to the imperatives of a divinely ordained moral law. In this way, ancient Judaism helped create the *moral rationalism* of Western civilization (256).

Love (2000b) too emphasizes the centrality of Weber's work, *Ancient Judaism,* to his theory of rationalism. He writes that this work of nearly 500 pages – "perhaps Weber's greatest single creation" – was an examination of the "decisive" ways in which Judaism contributed to the origins of Western rationalism, starting with its cultivation of a legalistic ethic with a highly ritualistic and formalized character. Love writes that, for Weber, the rule-oriented ethic of Judaism, including the non-naturalistic idea of Yahweh, were formulated between the 13th and 10th centuries BC. It was then that the Israelites came to conceive God as a supra-mundane, personal, wrathful, forgiving, and demanding lord of Creation rather than as a naturalistic God associated with the sudden appearance of thunder and other physical phenomena. It was also during this period that the Israelites came to interpret events in light of a special relationship, a covenant, between God and His people, as distinguished from the old local deities with their particularistic qualities and magical powers (202). With the coming of the prophets, the ritualistic-legalistic ethic was further developed in the direction of "a rationalized moral code which more and more required the commitment of the total personality" (209). The God that was promoted by the prophets was that of one supreme Deity who "acts like a human being with a rational will that can be known, and demands obedience to intelligible norms; unlike Baal [god of fertility] he cannot be manipulated by magic or other ritual devices" (210). Love does not refer to Bendix, but he concludes similarly that in the rationalism of Talmudic Judaism Weber saw an "achievement of the greatest significance for understanding later western history" (210).

We would be exaggerating, however, if we were to conclude that for Weber the ultimate cause of Western uniqueness was to be found directly in the teachings and writings of ancient Judaism. His book *Ancient Judaism*, as Bendix puts it (279), was only "the starting point of an explanation that occupied him the rest of his life." We should, in this vein, pay attention to Gary Abraham's carefully argued essay (1988), "Max Weber on 'Jewish Rationalism' and the Jewish Question." He says that Weber did not argue that there was a direct relationship between "Old Testament rationalism" and the rise of modern capitalism (with its disciplined rationalization of production). According to Abraham, Weber also observed that the caste-like separation of the Jews from

their surroundings made them a perpetual guest-people more interested in the preservation of their identity than in the encouragement of modernity. This "pariah status" promoted, on the one hand, a strong adherence to the ethical prescriptions of Judaism, in a rationalistic and a legalistic manner, but, on the other, it "led to the Jewish people's retaining a different economic morality for its relations with strangers than with fellow Jews" (as Weber wrote in the long section on "The Sociology of Jews and Judaism" in *Economy and Society* (Abraham 1988: 367). This rationalistic yet rigid adherence to the ethical prescriptions of Judaism thus led, paradoxically, to the valorization of the status quo and to "traditionalism". The religious and economic solidarity of the Jews likewise perpetuated the social distance between the Jewish people and other groups. Although the Jews were engaged in genuine profit-making ventures, they were not involved in the promotion of the modern factory and the widespread employment of wage-laborers; as Weber wrote, "the distinctive elements of modern capitalism originated and developed quite apart from the Jews" (Abraham: 366; see also Weber 1981: 358–60).

Abraham writes that Weber came to these views in conscious opposition to Werner Sombart's contemporaneous book, *The Jews and Modern Capitalism* (1913), where he had argued that Jews were the major promoters of a modern nation-less capitalism. Kalberg appears to be in agreement with Abraham in writing that Weber "saw the capitalism of the Jews as a form of the speculative capitalism that had existed universally" (2002: xxiii). Nevertheless, it seems to me that Weber did detect in Judaism a rationalistic disposition as well as a "this-worldly" attitude to the world that had strong affinities with Protestantism. As Love reminds us, Weber wrote in the *Protestant Ethic* that Puritanism inherited the "perfectly unemotional wisdom of the Hebrews" which had seen "the rational suppression of the mystical…side of religion." Weber also observed that Old Testament morality, despite its traditional basis in ethics, "was able to give a powerful impetus to that spirit of self-righteous and sober legality which was so characteristic of the worldly asceticism of….Protestantism" (in Love 2000b: 200).[13] He included Judaism – together with the theoretical rationality of Catholic theology and the

[13] See also his *General Economic History*: "Judaism was none the less of notable significance for modern rational capitalism, insofar as it transmitted to Christianity the latter's hostility to magic" (1981: 360).

Protestant rediscovery of the original Judaic ethic – in his grand theory of Western rationalization. It was ultimately Protestantism that promoted the *modern* spirit of capitalism, but this should not lead us to conclude that Weber did not also attribute a very important (early) role to Judaism.

Schluchter on the Genetic Developmental Dynamic of the West

It can be argued that Weber's sociology of religion was the most important part of his theory of rationalism (Tenbruck 1980) and, consequently, that Weber paid considerably more attention to the rationalization of religious life because in Judeo-Christianity there was to be found the original ethos which came to provide the ethical (substantive or value) justification for the subsequent rationalization of Western economic life. Whereas other world religions tended to reinforce, and even make sacred, traditional norms and actions, Judeo-Christianity cultivated a this-worldly ethic that eventually culminated in the reconciliation of economic rationalization within its system of substantive ethical values.

This last point is implied in Wolfgang Schluchter's *The Rise of Western Rationalism, Max Weber's Developmental Theory* (1985). This short but intricate book, packed with categories, diagrams, classifications, and tables, is much more than a mere exposition of Weber. Ignored by all the scholars in this debate, Schluchter's book[14] is a conceptual "reconstruction" of Weber's work in a way that crystallizes its genetic and developmental character.[15] Reading this book from the perspective

[14] Vries (2008) lists this book and four other publications by Schluchter to back up the rather plain statement that for Weber "the West underwent a uniquely intense process of rationalization," without any additional words. I should add here that although Bryant is generally sympathetic to Weber's work, he tends to follow an influential reading of Weber as someone whose writings on state power and class structures rounded out and supplemented Marx's work. For a Weber that plays second fiddle to Marx, see Zeitlin (1994). Collins, Tilly, Mann, and other "Weberians" whom I examined in chapter four recognize the force of Weber's contributions, but they too tend to emphasize Weber's ideas on state "power" and the "monopolization of violence" by the modern state. I prefer the so-called "German School" of Weber interpretation for its focus on the theory of rationalization; namely the work of Tenbruck, Schluchter, and Habermas.

[15] Habermas coins this term in reference to his own reconstruction of Weber, one which he notices in Schluchter but tries to carry further, as we will see below. A reconstruction, according Habermas, takes the theory apart and puts it back together again in a new form in order to attain more fully the aim it has set for itself (1979: 95).

of the rise of the West debate, I would argue that it shows that Weber's basic insight was that the West was the only culture that cultivated a set of norms and values with an intrinsic developmental dynamic which came to have a universalistic meaning. The distinctiveness of the West lay in the fostering of an ethos which furthered abstraction, universalization and rationalization in all spheres of social life.

According to Schluchter, it was primarily in his sociologies of world religions that Weber offered a systematic account of the stages of this dynamic: from an ethic based on magic (sorcerers and fearful powers beyond comprehension), to an ethic based on law (commandments and books), to an ethic of conviction (one's inner conscience), and to an ethic of personal responsibility and tolerance towards the convictions of others.

For all the countless studies on Weber, he is still commonly seen as someone who explained *actual* change in terms of the autonomous logic of ideas. But, as Schluchter cautiously explains, his sociology was equally concerned with the material interests, institutions and classes that were associated with the actualization of ideas in the world as institutions of society. Humans were inescapably preoccupied with their material interests, their well-being and their survival. But he also saw a strong need in humans to give meaning to their life, and this spiritual need was just as important as the struggle for physical needs (25–26). Human ideas were always mediated historically by a wide range of institutional realms and value spheres. Weber spoke in very abstract terms of such institutional realms and value spheres as the family, the economy, religion, and politics, each of which was seen as constituting a historically given framework within which the material and spiritual needs of humans were interpreted and actualized by individual actors. He also analyzed on a lower level of abstraction institutions and values. In the case of the political realm, for example, he analyzed the relation of the cities, churches, the monarchy, and the feudal nobility (27–31).

The historical theory of rationalization distinguished, in the case of value-spheres, between cognitive-theoretical values, religious-substantive-ethical values, aesthetic-expressive values, and practical-utilitarian values. It was in the spheres of cognitive and practical values that Weber observed a process of rationalization that came to penetrate all areas of Western everyday social life, music, painting, architecture, religion, historical research, military organization, and state administration. Schluchter notes that Weber concentrated most of his historical

studies on the rationalization of the value-sphere of religion, where he saw a directional movement from a mythological world view, which sustained its beliefs in the form of taboos without conceiving the violations of prescriptions as sin, to an ethics of commandments guided by a metaphysical relationship of supplication and veneration toward symbolic representations. The rationalization of *cognitive* values, however, was required for the development of a religion based on concepts rather than myths, of a "metaphysical" religion in the form of a theodicy with a definite system of concepts offering "rational" answers to questions dealing with such matters as the transcendental character of God and the imperfection of this world (43–45).

At this level of religious rationalization, moral judgments of an abstract and *principled* kind became a possibility, but it was Weber's view that the emergence of an ethic of abstract principle – in contrast to an ethics based on custom and convention – was encouraged particularly by the Judeo-Christian idea of a personal ethical God with "an absolutely transcendental character". This religion of personal salvation cultivated an ethic of conviction, and then of personal responsibility. Using Weber's own words, Schluchter explains the inner logic of this religion – not to be confused with historic inevitability – as follows:

> The more rational it [the idea of salvation] became and the more it was sublimated in the direction of an ethic of conviction, the more those commandments that grew out of the ethic of reciprocity in the neighborhood association were intensified externally and internally. Externally, those commandments became a communism of loving brethren; internally, they produced the stance of charity, love for the sufferer, for one's neighbor, for man, and finally for one's enemy (48).

Schluchter further adds, using phrases from Weber, how the process of abstraction and universalization transformed

> the simple 'principle of helping brothers in distress', which was originally restricted to the neighborhood association, tended to lead in the long run not only to the destruction of group boundaries, 'frequently including one's own religious association,' but to the transformation of the idea of salvation itself into the idea of liberation and self-fulfillment, to the idea of emancipation (48).

The development of an ethic of responsibility that was universalistic and that transcended an ethic of conviction, based on ethnic or tribal identities, required a transition from principles of faith to principles of *critical reason*, as well as the extension of the idea of freedom of

conscience. While the ethic of conviction promoted the right of the believer to be free in his own conscience, it tended to uphold "freedom of conscience for itself, but not for dissenters" (58). Only when an ethic of responsibility was reached, based on a type of reason that was self-reflective and willing to question all presuppositions, and was aware of the consequences of one's actions for others, did humans come to accept freedom of conscience unconditionally. This was achieved with the Enlightenment and the Declaration of the Rights of Man.

Now, according to Schluchter, the actualization of these "modern" values was not a movement that unfolded by immanent necessity out of the religious concepts themselves. The "inner necessity" (5) Weber apprehended in history was on the level of concepts. He argued specifically against a teleological view of history governed by inner laws (1949). He never presented his sociology as a discovery of the laws of history. On the other hand, he did not picture history as a meaningless maelstrom of disconnected events without patterns and tendencies. He believed that there was an inner dynamic, an ethos, within the sphere of religion that could be traced back to the Judaic idea of a transcendent creator God seen as personal and as demanding individual conviction and principled conduct on earth. But while Judaism had elements of a principled ethics, Weber believed that in its Talmudic form, and in other parts of the Old Testament, it came to appear as primarily an ethics of unreflective norms in its demand of obedience to the letter of the law, its fear of the law, and its ascriptive attachment to a particular ethnic group. On its own, Judaism did not generate, in Weber's words, "a systematization of religious obligations in the form of an ethic of conviction" (69). It was the arrival of Jesus' sermon, St. Paul's mission, and Hellenic philosophy which encouraged a higher level of abstraction and universalization of religion. The contribution of Paul was immense, as Schluchter reads Weber, in the way he selectively combined the universal-oriented traits of Judaism with the New Testament and its emphasis on the unity of mankind and the singularity of each person, together with Hellenistic norms and "mysteries of the cult of Kyrios Christos" (152; see also Love 2000b: 218). This Judeo-Christian and Hellenic ethic cultivated the ideal of the individual who is oriented, in Weber's words, "to master the world by discovering its impersonal laws" (150).

Paul's mission, however, would not have developed into a world historical movement without, first, integrating itself with the high intellectual culture of Hellenic cosmopolitanism and its Stoic idea of an

intelligible "natural" order, which could be comprehended by human reason, and, second, without the provision by the Roman empire of the territorial principle of political loyalty, together with a bureaucratic framework directed by a rational system of laws (152–153). It is important to understand that this process of rationalization within Christianity was combined with ancient Greek rationalism, which was a movement of "independent significance" within the cognitive sphere, and that this combination in turn met the Roman legal system, which also had an "independent significance" not necessarily related to the Christian-Hellenic dynamic, but which did come together with it to move in the same historical direction.

The oft-repeated claim that, for Weber, capitalism was a creation of the Protestant ethic simplifies too much. He was well-aware that, before the Reformation, capitalistic acquisition, rational banking, and bookkeeping were highly advanced activities in Italy and also in Flanders.[16] The thesis of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* is quite limited in its temporal scope. It seeks to show that the ethic of ascetic Protestantism passed on to an already existing set of capitalistic practices, a morality that was not just at ease with money-making ventures but that anointed it with a redemptive mission through the authentication of hard work, self-restraint, accumulation of capital, and technical proficiency.

The link between ancient Judaism and ascetic Protestantism was mediated by crucial phases of rationalization within Christianity, and by *parallel and uneven developmental dynamics* within other non-religious value-spheres and institutional-realms with antecedent conditions and logics of their own. Added to the movements mentioned above, there was the Catholic Church's organizational structure and scholastic method of reasoning (Grant 2001), the Gregorian reform and the systematization of Canon law (Berman 1983), the contractual and decentralized character of feudalism combined with the separation

[16] Among the reasons for Pellicani's (1994) rejection of the "Weberian myth of Calvinism" is his observation that the Italian city-states were the harbingers of capitalist modernity. Lutz Kaelber makes (1996) a compelling argument that Weber's ideas on the role of Christian rationalism changed over the last fifteen years of his life as he engaged in further research on "precursors to Calvinist inner worldly asceticism" in various medieval heterodox sects. Randall Collins detects in the monastic order of the Cistercians who thrived in the 12th and 13th centuries the "main features of capitalism itself," a strong inner worldly asceticism, a "form of rational cost accounting" and profit-making (1990: 53–54).

of society into autonomous corporate bodies (Anderson 1975), the Renaissance, the Scientific Revolution, and the Enlightenment.

For Weber, the coming together of these segmental movements in the same general direction was, *strictly speaking*, an accidental occurrence insomuch as each of these movements came to light under concrete conditions of immense complexity. These movements were "embedded" to complex configurations of "inner" and "external" factors, unintended consequences, material struggles, charismatic personalities, and environmental circumstances. What makes Weber superior to concept-less world historians and de-historicized sociologists was his realization that there was an "inner necessity" in the history of the West that could be comprehended in retrospect, by looking backwards from the vantage point of our present rationalized age. I would suggest that Weber used the term "inner necessity" as an inclusive antonym of the term "arbitrary" in order to denote the idea that a directional pattern could be detected, retrospectively, in the rise of Western rationalism.

Habermas and the Rationalization of Substantive Values

There is clearly a missing link in Schluchter's account. One is left wondering how freedom of conscience, and the "rights of man" were engendered by the process of rationalization. We are all familiar with Weber's thesis that modernity is characterized above all by the increasing dominance of a specific type of formal or instrumental rationality in which ends/means ways of thinking (standardization, cost-benefit analysis, and bureaucratic coordination) dictate all human relationships. Now, it is true that in Weber's usage, rationalization implied the idea of "progress" through accumulation of wealth, increasing knowledge of nature, and the emancipation of the rational self from the inflexible bonds of traditional cultures. Weber did write sometimes of rationalization in terms that recognized its liberal character – the development of legal, ethical and scientific orientations freed from magic and from the autocratic and theocratic power of kings and clerics. He also took note of the trend toward formal rights of citizenship and the leveling of pre-modern systems of stratification. (Scaff 2000). Yet there is no denying that his focus was on the process he called "disenchantment of the world", the loss of a sacred sense of wholeness, and the "inescapable" breakdown of the meaning between self and world

provided by myth, religion, and tradition. Already in his own time he felt that the original religious inspiration behind rationalization was fading away, as well as the highest ideals of the West, like the autonomous and free individual, "whose actions were given continuity by reference to ultimate values" (1958: 181–3). It was this increasing dominance of "instrumental" reason that Marxists and Critical Theorists would later go on to emphasize in Weber and reframe in terms of the "commodification of everything".

I think it is worth paying attention to Jurgen Habermas's (1984: 143–271) "reconstruction" of Weber's theory of rationalization away from its one-sided emphasis on means-ends categories, purposive or goal-oriented actions, and "instrumental standards. While Habermas does not deny that the process of rationalization has been dictated by the imperatives of state power and capitalist accumulation, he thinks that Weber underestimated the ethical thrust behind this process. The thrust of Western rationalism, Habermas argues, was also characterized by increasing levels of cognitive reflection and ethical learning. Had Weber written a developmental history of the *substantive* rationality of the West, rather than assuming that one value system was no more (substantively) rational than another, he might have seen more clearly that this process of rationalization was "not only in the dimension of technically utilizable knowledge…but also in the development of moral-practical consciousness" (cited in McCarthy 1989: 245–6).[17]

Habermas thus carries a "reconstruction" of Weber in order to pull out of his writings, and develop further, a conception of the history of rationalization in which the emphasis is on the achievement of increasing levels of moral reflection. In so doing, he explains that a central characteristic of Western rationalization was the progressive institutionalization of higher levels of self-conscious understanding of the normative structures of society. This evolution can be ordered in stages exhibiting a developmental logic. Habermas, accordingly, draws on Jean Piaget's ontogenetic model of cognitive development and Lawrence Kohlberg's schema of the stages of moral consciousness. Now, I understand that historians are highly skeptical of the application of any

[17] Weber's relativism is keenly evident in this passage: "It must be recognize that world views can never be the products of advancing empirical knowledge, and that therefore the highest ideals, which move us most powerfully, are formed for all time only in the struggle with other ideals which are just as sacred to others as ours are to us" (in Scaff 2000: 105).

ontogenetic models to history. Habermas is no historian; and although his description of this logic is diachronic, it lacks concrete historical references. Let us, nevertheless, sum up Kohlberg's schema because it is the more relevant one for our purposes here. Kohlberg says that the ethical consciousness of individuals, as they mature from childhood to adulthood, shows a pattern of development moving from a "pre-conventional" conception of right and wrong based on the physical or the hedonistic consequences (punishment or reward) of action, to a "conventional" conception based on showing respect for authority and maintaining the normative order for its own sake and, finally, to a "post-conventional" conception based on recognition of the universal rights of individuals and respect for the dignity of human beings as persons (Habermas 1979: 73–89).

One of the main criticisms directed at Kohlberg's schema was that, rather than reflecting learning stages belonging to the basic psychosocial nature of humans, it reflected the biases of his own Western culture with its emphasis on individual rights and universalistic legal norms. But this criticism, I would argue, makes Habermas's use of Kohlberg's stages all the more relevant to my own use of Habermas to accentuate the uniquely progressive ethical history of the West. Habermas actually offers (1979: 156–163) a "very tentative" historical schema of the evolution of societies (Neolithic, archaic civilizations, advanced civilizations, and *modern Western* societies) in terms of a bidimensional learning process (cognitive/technical and moral/practical). He notes that in *early* modern Western societies one observes not only enterprises that are rationalized in the way Weber described this process, but also political doctrines grounded on principles worded in universalistic terms (natural law, for example), as well as social and political institutions that are structured post-conventionally and are guided by promises of justice, truth, and freedom.

My aim here, however, is not to work out Habermas's schema using additional sources and further empirical evidence. Rather, I simply want to show that a combination of Weber and Habermas affords us with a vision that does not depict the rise of Western rationalism as a malleable instrument of technocratic domination and class interest. It gives us a perspective that takes seriously the evolution of rational legal codes, for example, that protect us from arbitrary confiscation and from unpredictable political interferences. Robert Marks's conclusion (2002: 151) that the rise of the West is "the story of how some states and peoples benefited from historically contingent events and geography to be able, at a certain point in time (a historical conjuncture), to

dominate others and to accumulate wealth and power," completely leaves out the specifically Western achievement of producing self-governing institutions – from medieval estates with corporate rights through the triumph of representative institutions over kings to the declaration of human rights – with the powers to criticize and challenge the weight of the state and capital.

When one looks at the history of the modern West, from a perspective informed by the work of Habermas and other liberal democratic thinkers, one sees the rise of a culture in which no singular authority has the right to impose on individuals an overarching vision of the human good. One sees a society in which a discussion of the ultimate values of a society, to use the words of Castoriadis, is open for debate and becomes the affair of citizens and not "of rabbis, of priests, of mullahs, of courtiers, or of solitary monks" (Castoriadis 1992). One sees a conversation that presupposes certain procedural rules, such as the fair equality of the agents in dialogue, and the right and opportunity of all citizens to have a fair chance to speak. While individuals are encouraged to follow their own opinion, "intersubjective validation or justification from others" is required for social or political life (Benhabib 1992: 45).

Although Habermas speaks of a learning process, his focus has been primarily on the general linguistic presuppositions of intersubjective mutuality and reciprocal understanding. He has made no more than passing references to such epoch making transformations as the English Civil War, the Reformation, and the French Revolution. The one detailed study he wrote that may be deemed to have been historically oriented was *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (1962). This work argued that a new civic society emerged in the 18th century in Britain's coffee houses, France's salons and Germany's *Tischgesellschaften*. It was here where private individuals came together in public settings to articulate, negotiate, and put forward ideas by way of rational communication with one another, free from the economy and the authority of the state. However, the focus of this work, written when Habermas was much closer to the Marxist inclinations of the Critical School, was on the ways in which powerful capitalistic forces had undermined the independence of the public sphere.[18]

[18] I shall clarify why I am using the "critical theory" of Habermas differently from the way I used the "critical theory" of Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse in

What I would like to do next is to elucidate the progressive rationalization of the West by way of a historiographical examination of the development of liberal-democratic institutions.

The Liberal Democratic Ideals of the West and its Historiography

We can no longer rely on the evocative but dated theses of White, McNeill, Landes, Braudel, Jones, and Hall. Among the many interesting books on the uniqueness of the West and the progression of

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chapter one. I first read Habermas's *Toward a Rational Society,* which contains his classic paper "Technology and Science as Ideology," as an undergraduate. I was attracted to the argument that scientific and technical progress "is no longer only a critical standard for the development level of the forces of production [but…] is also an apologetic standard…" At this point I was a "New Left" Marxist, and I read Habermas in that light. As I studied *Theory and Society*, *Legitimation Crisis,* and *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, I began to appreciate Habermas's effort to defend the achievement of the Enlightenment. It was later, as a PhD student – having completed an MA thesis on the Marxist historiography of the French Revolution – that I went on to study such works as *Negative Dialectics*, *Reason and Revolution*, *One Dimensional Man*, *Eclipse of Reason*, and *Dialectical of Enlightenment*. My understanding of these books was thus informed by Habermas's ideas. I agreed that the insights of Critical Theory could be used to challenge what he called "the systematically distorted communication" of a purely economic and scientific understanding of the rise of Western reason. Later, as I continued to read Habermas, I began to think in earnest about the uniqueness of Western reason; together with my interest in the philosophy of Hegel, I came to think of the "theory of communication action" as a reconstruction of the rationalization of Western culture. Critical thinking itself made sense in light of, and not against, the liberal and humanitarian aspirations of the West. His theory of communicative rationality clearly suggests that modern Western beliefs – to the degree to which they are open to reflection and modification – are superior to dogmatically accepted beliefs. It has been argued that Habermas's philosophy is Eurocentric (Dussel 1996) and that it lacks a proper hermeneutic insight into the ways of thinking and living of non-Western cultures. This was the underlying theme of Habermas's much-discussed debate with Hans Gadamer. While I am drawn to Gadamer's argument that prejudgment – "prejudice" – is both a vital component of the cultural formation of humans (I am prejudicially in favor of the West), I would add that the effort to understand a tradition or another culture "from the inside out" – in its own terms through a dialogical engagement – presupposes a universal standpoint wherein one can free oneself from a closed, dogmatic endorsement of a singular point of view. Hermeneutics on its own, without critical enlightenment and respect for the rights of individuals, can lead to the acceptance of anti-Enlightenment views. I welcome Gadamer's call for hermeneutical sensitivity to "authority" and "tradition." I value the traditions of Christianity. But I also agree with Habermas that the Enlightenment is now an integral-traditional part of our Western heritage. This tradition encourages us to employ our rational faculties: the Enlightenment demands that "Reason be recognized as the principle of communication, free from…the repressivity of forces which deform the intersubjectivity of agreement as such and which systematically distort everyday communication" (Habermas 2003: 168).

modernity published in the last three decades I would include Harold J. Berman's *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition* (1983); Charles Taylor's *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (1989); Orlando Patterson's *Freedom in the Making of Western Culture* (1991); Toby E. Huff's *The Rise of Early Modern Science* (1983); Steven Ozment's *Protestants: The Birth of a Revolution* (1993); Victor Davis Hanson's *The Other Greeks: The Family Farm and the Agrarian Roots of Western Civilization* (1999); Marcia L. Colish's *Medieval Foundations of the Western Intellectual Tradition, 400–1400* (1997); Jerome Schneewind's *The Invention of Autonomy: A History of Modern Moral Philosophy* (1998); Edward Grant's *God and Reason in the Middle Ages* (2001); and Jonathan Israel's *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650–1750* (2001).

These books, categorized under many different disciplines, including Classical Studies, History/Religion, History of Science, Technology, Philosophy, Ethics, Legal Studies, European History, Historical Sociology, and Medieval Studies, are not all about the rise of the West proper but cover specific periods, themes, and stages in the making of modern Europe. Their arguments, moreover, are not always consistent. Still, their essential message – taken together – can be framed within a morally progressive perspective, according to which the rise of the West is the story of the realization of humans who think of themselves as self-determining and therefore accept as authoritative only those norms and institutions that can be seen to be congenial with their awareness of themselves as free and rational agents.[19]

To start with Hanson's carefully documented work, *The Other Greeks*: ancient Greece was the only Bronze-Age society that did not consist mostly of peasants in subsistence agriculture at the mercy of a narrow oligarchy. In small hunting and gathering societies, including loosely organized tribal societies, adult members participated in the governance of their community, which is why anthropologists have described these societies as "primitive democracies." But once state-centralized societies emerged, participation in the decision making process was

[19] Vries approvingly voices a common complaint of revisionists: "Too many claims about European 'exceptionalism' were nothing but a measure of the existing ignorance with regard to the history of the world" (2008: 8). This complaint is wrong in its very core; revisionists have in fact drawn many of *their* ideas on the history of the world from Western scholars. It is the revisionists who are rather ignorant of Europe's history.

reserved only for the king and his closest administrators. Greece was the first society to combine a centralized city-based polity with the full civic participation of all adult male members of the community. This ideal of civic freedom was sociologically based on the rise of a class of independent farmers who owned and worked their small-size farms at the end of the Greek Dark Ages (about 1100–800 B.C.E.). For the next four centuries (700–300 BCE) these farmers, who on average owned farms of about 10 acres, became the dominant cultural force. They were not the majority in absolute numbers – one third to one half of the adult male free residents of the Greek polis saw themselves as independent landowners – but they revolutionized the cultural life of their fellow Greeks. To protect and empower themselves, this group of yeomen farmers – "an entirely new phenomenon in history" – cultivated a cultural ethos of family-centered production on family property, an economic mentality that emphasized free choice in economic activity and that favored constitutional government based on local representation. A voting citizenry of independent farmers thus came to dominate more than 1,000 small city-states throughout the Greek-speaking ancient world.[20]

We also learn from Hanson's previously mentioned book, *Carnage and Culture,* that Republican Rome saw the same form of landownership by yeomen farmers who tilled the land themselves with the help of their family and perhaps a few slaves, and who formed the military basis of the state. Rome borrowed the Greek ideal of civic militarism and, in the course of the Second Punic War (218–201 B.C.E.), improved upon it "through its own unique idea of nationhood and its attendant corollary of allowing autonomy for its Latin-speaking allies, with both full and partial citizenship to residents of other Italian communities – and in the centuries to come full citizenship to those of any race and language that might accept Roman law and pay taxes" (114–5). Whereas Greeks were unwilling to grant citizenship to foreigners and even to Greeks from other city-states, the Romans came to define a "Roman"

[20] Hanson, I must say, draws too sharp a distinction between Greek freedom and Near Eastern "despotism". In Sumerian society, for example, there was a relatively large, independent merchant class with rights of private property conferred by legal codes. While the upper classes did not enjoy civic freedom and the constitutional right to participate in government, they did enjoy, one could say, a genial, urbane way of life, and they could voice complaints about corrupt or oppressive state officials. What differentiates the Greeks is the "social construction of freedom as a central value."

not by race, geography or even free birth, but by reference to anyone who shared the culture and political institutions of the Roman commonwealth. The Roman Republic thus became a vast "nation of free citizens-in-arms."

The Greek ideal of freedom – or so argues Patterson in his richly-textured intellectual story, *Freedom in the Making of Western Culture* – continued to unfold even during the late republican history of Rome from about 133 B.C.E. to the establishment of the principate in 27 B.C.E., a period not only of chronic class conflict and civil wars but of the rise of large scale slave plantation systems. This period saw the development of a legal system that, at least formally, though with great difficulty in practice, "advocated the rule of law and theoretical equality," and did in fact offer "protection against arbitrary action in most areas of life," including no punishment without trial and conviction, the right of appeal, and the right to security of private property. While Roman civic freedom did not differ much from its Greek counterpart and remained an ideal exercised by the aristocratic elites, "the Romans were even more committed to civic equality" than the Greeks. The Romans managed to ensure greater turnover in the tenure of higher offices by the upper classes, and related to this, they also "completely dropped the old patrician emphasis on ingenium – birth or bloodline – as a source of [aristocratic] virtue, and instead they broadened the notion of *virtus* to emphasize achievement through competition" (218–22).

Another truly novel feature of Roman freedom was that no other civilization in the history of slavery granted (limited) citizenship to so many manumitted slaves (or freedmen) and full citizenship to their descendants so that by early imperial times the majority of Roman citizens were descendants of slaves! Patterson writes:

> This extraordinary socio-demographic reality play[ed] a critical role in the history of freedom. For it meant that for the first time in history we find a society in which the great majority of free persons cherished the value of personal freedom in the most literal sense of liberation from enslavement (236).

And furthermore, according to Patterson, what makes the Roman conception of freedom itself unique was the addition of a fully articulated conception of inner freedom. With deep roots in classical Greece, in the Socratic method of moral introspection, in Epicurus' arguments in favour of free will, in the Cynic method of living free from all external and bodily demands, this inner conception of freedom, as expressed in

the philosophy of Stoicism, became the dominant intellectual force among the Roman upper class during the first two centuries of the Empire. Among the most important strands of Stoicism was Cicero's patrician view that only men of inner intellectual strength and character, the wise and the virtuous, are free and deserve to be rulers. Then there was the "imperial version" of Stoicism, found in most of Seneca's writings, advocating the idea of a perfect parallel between the interior relation of reason to the body and the emperor's relation to the people. Just as reason in its freedom directs the body, and the cosmic order directs the emperor, so the emperor in his freedom directs the people to live in conformity with the cosmic order. "The ideal to which a prince might best mold himself," Seneca wrote, "is to deal with his subjects as he would wish the gods to deal with him." "Treat your inferior as you would wish your superior to treat you" (272–77).

But it was really Epictetus, an ex-slave, and Marcus Aurelius, an emperor, who added "something fundamentally new … to the Western discourse on freedom." Both men, Patterson explains, "yearned for a freedom they had never experienced" (272–7). For Epictetus, it was that he was born a slave and wanted to know what it really meant to be free beyond the fact that he was no longer a slave, in contrast to the freeman who was captured and enslaved and merely longed to be set free again. For Aurelius, it was that he could not accept the freedom he saw around him, specifically the corrupted and decadent freedom in the court life of the Roman elite, and so he too wanted to understand the ontological meaning and purpose of freedom beyond simply doing what one pleased.

As an ex-slave, Epictetus could not deny the value of simple negative freedom, of simply doing what one felt like doing, what made one happy. Yet he also realized there is a distinction between doing things that are under our control, and doing things that are not. The desires associated with our bodies are not under our control. To be truly free one must be freed from bodily-emotional impulses such as love or hate or desire for wealth. The source of freedom could only be found within the inner person and not in response to external forces or bodily passions. One is free when one makes choices without being subordinated to any desire but by virtue of one's reason. Reason is the true source of moral choice. While we live in a world dominated by forces that are not under our control, we have a faculty called reason which is fully under our control. Reason is the faculty of choice and refusal, and indeed of freedom. Epictetus also said that the freedom we are capable of

achieving within the inner world of reason could be one with the all-knowing power of god, the cosmic order, the divine will of Zeus.

It was Aurelius, however, who developed what Patterson calls a "thoroughly organic conception of both the outer and inner universe." While he seemed less satisfied than Epictetus with his efforts to find the meaning of freedom, Aurelius also believed that our capacity to be free was intimately connected with the master faculty of reason. But he went further in articulating a conception of inner human freedom that corresponded to the external world. The world of mankind is a rational order in which each person was given a role to play. Insomuch as each person recognized the rationality of the external world, "the intelligence of the Whole," each person could act in harmony with this world and with each other. The ruler should play the part allotted to him by the intelligence of the universe, the rational order which underlies the Whole, and which is an order one can recognize through the use of one's faculty of reason. The "intelligence" of the external world can be apprehended within the inner world of the person in the form of a "directing mind." A human is free to the degree that he uses his inner "directing mind," which is the only "will that wills itself," the only "pure self-directed and self-creating activity" (285–6).

Patterson's account of Western freedom is far more complex, and before he ends it in the Middle Ages, by which time he thinks (and I disagree) that the value of freedom was almost fully completed, he goes through St. Paul's "remaking of the Western consciousness" in his emphasis on the equality and universality of freedom through faith in Jesus. Although Patterson recognizes that the personal and civic freedoms the ancient Greeks already practiced were values that came to full fruition in the modern era, he adds that "what was distinctive about the medieval era" was the emergence of a strongly corporatist (or "sovereignal") conception of freedom. This conception began with powerful feudal lords who enjoyed and were granted sovereign powers within their own domains, including the right to hold court and judge and punish within their territories. These powers were gradually broadened and deepened so that by the late medieval period, sovereignal freedom "had been remarkably democratized, partly under the impact of revolts by free peasants, and urban freeman, wanting more of the individual and corporate liberties and immunities" that had been the privilege normally of landlords (337–44, 359, 362).

However, it is in Berman's award-winning work, *Law and Revolution*, Huff's *Rise of Early Modern Science*, Colish's *Medieval Foundations*,

and Grant's *God and Reason* that we find an exhaustive explanation as to why "medieval Europe is the only traditional society known to history to modernize itself from within, intellectually no less than economically and technologically" (Colish: x). According to Berman, the period between 1000 and 1200 saw a "tremendous transformation" in the legal institutions of Western Europe. Out of the Papal Revolution, the great confrontation between church and state in the investiture controversy (ca. 1050–1122), came the idea of the church's corporate autonomy, its right to exercise legislative, administrative, and judicial powers within its own domain, including the right to levy taxes, in addition to the dominion it already asserted over wide areas of civil and domestic affairs. Only the clergy, under the authority of the pope, had competence over spiritual matters. But if the crown gradually renounced its pretension to be the supreme ruler of the clergy, the papacy, for its part, renounced its claim to temporal supremacy. Not that this revolution resulted in a separation between church and state in the full modern sense, since lay rulers continued to play an important part in church politics for quite some time and, conversely, the clergy also continued to play an important role in secular affairs. What Berman finds revolutionary is the way the church, in acquiring independent law-making powers, went on to cultivate a whole new legal system deeply indebted to Roman concepts but which constituted "the first modern Western legal system": the first comprehensive and rational systematization of law (85–119).By analyzing and synthesizing all authoritative statements concerning the nature of law, the various sources of law, and the definitions and relationships between the different kinds of law (divine law, natural law, human law, the law of the church, the law of princes, enacted law, customary law), Ecclesiastical scholars created the intellectual and legal basis for the reconstitution of medieval Europe as a "warren of jurisdictions" (kingdoms, baronies, bishoprics, urban communes, guilds, universities), which in turn resulted in the preconditions and the experience for a civil society where no authority, not even the pope or the king, had complete political, religious, or intellectual jurisdiction.

In Huff's estimation, this separation of corporate powers was the most important factor "that laid the foundations for the rise and autonomous development of modern science" in Europe and not in the civilizations of Islam and China. This warren of jurisdictions was not just a question of Europe's decentralized feudal structure, since in reality the more centralized societies of Asia experienced long periods of internal war, state breakdown, and decentralization of power. It was

Europe's organization into legally sanctioned institutions such as cities, universities, and monasteries that set it apart. Members could enjoy a degree of autonomy not tolerated, or legally guaranteed, in more centralized societies such as China, where authority descended from the emperor and his officials down.

There is no denying that from the 8th to the 12th century, Europe learned a great deal from the more advanced Arabic sciences. But thereafter it was Europe that underwent a revolutionary transformation at the heart of which, as Huff says, was a legal revolution that conceded corporate status to the Christian church and a variety of other collectivities to make contracts, to enact their own ordinances and statutes, "to own property, to sue and be sued, and to have legal representation before the king's court" (119–38). Manors, cities, and merchant associations, among others, enacted whole new systems of law, including manorial law, urban law, and merchant law.

Such legislative, executive, and judicial powers were not a possibility in Islamic societies, because in Islamic law there was no separation between the sacred and the secular, no texts and rules to define and limit the jurisdictional powers of courts, and no idea of corporate groups independent of the family and kin group (138–41, 235).[21] China, too, never evolved a conception of law that recognized the right of corporate bodies, including cities, to regulate their own affairs independently of the state, or the bonds of kinship (317).

This legal revolution of the Middle Ages is intimately connected to the history of the universities in the West. No other civilization conferred the privileges of a corporation to institutions of higher learning wherein reason could find a "neutral space" of free inquiry. Grant convincingly shows that medieval Europe was the first civilization to "institutionalize reason" within self-governing universities which offered a curriculum "overwhelmingly oriented toward analytical subjects: logic, science, mathematics, and natural philosophy" (9–11, 277–82). While medieval intellectuals were prohibited from reaching

[21] This is not to say that traditional Islamic Middle Eastern societies were, to use a modern term, "totalitarian". The kind of government operated by Saddam Hussein with the capacity to suppress all opposition was in fact a product of modernization. The authority of traditional rulers was limited by the presence of other established groups in society, the merchants of the bazaar, powerful guilds, local landowners, and religious authorities. The "rights" of these intermediate groups, however, did not rest on legally sanctioned privileges and institutionalized representative assemblies, but on customary ranks and kinship ties.

ultimate truths that were contrary to revealed truth, natural philosophers were free to pursue knowledge about the universe "in a remarkably secular and rationalistic manner with little interference from the Church and its theologians" (15). More than that, medieval theologians, by applying logical-mathematical techniques to theological questions, cultivated a religion like none before: a systematized and rationalized Christian faith. It was within this unique institution of higher learning, together with the independent influence of Greek thought and its belief in the underlying regularities of nature and in the rational capacity of humans to explain those regularities, as initially built up and stored by Islamic scholars, that the "external or social foundations" of modern science were firmly established. In the numerous universities that flourished in Europe in the 12th century, the ethos of science and commitment to rational dialogue based on logic, evidence, and experimentation was nurtured. Blaut brushes aside any claims about medieval European priority in scientific knowledge with nondescript remarks such as "scientific thought was characteristic of all major civilizations. Modern science, in Europe, emerges well after economic modernization has begun" (2000: 145). To be sure, Arabic and Chinese sciences in astronomy, mathematics, medicine, and optics were well advanced for many centuries, but once Europeans translated and elaborated Greek and Islamic texts, they went on to develop a uniquely quantitative conception of the world according to number, weight, and measure. From Roger Bacon (d. 1292) to Jean Buridan (1295–1358), from Nicolas d'Oresme (1325–82) to Nicholas of Cusa (1401–64) – who wrote: "Think of precision for God is absolute precision itself" – medieval thinkers anticipated Copernicus, Kepler and Galileo (Crosby: 101). Impressive as the Chinese were in their ability to create efficient technologies out of their natural knowledge, or the Arabs in their sophisticated science of optics, and their complex planetary models (of the Maraghan school), neither made the big leap to an algebra based on geometric models, to a mechanistic and heliocentric perspective.[22]

[22] Syed Farid Atalas underestimates greatly the novelty of medieval universities when he writes, "the notion of a degree granting institution of learning was developed and put into practice by the Muslims by the tenth century and adopted by the Europeans in the thirteenth century" (2002: 768). As Huff writes: "The madrasas was a pious endowment under the law of religious and charitable foundations, and as such was neither an entity legally independent of religious precepts or commitment nor an

But while I agree with Grant and Colish that the "broad foundations" of the modern world were firmly established during the Medieval era, let us remember, finally, that many additional revolutions were to come before the full arrival of modernity in the 12th century. We mentioned the multiple post-medieval currents that came together in the Renaissance and nurtured the ideal of self-directed human action, the idea that each human is capable of discovering the highest good for himself, which challenged the Roman and medieval idea that man's ends could only be discovered outside, in what was already a cosmically realized order.

One of the most important currents coming after the Renaissance was, of course, the Protestant Reformation. Taylor argues in his concentrated but clearly articulated work, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, that one of the essential legacies of the Protestant movement was "the affirmation of ordinary life." This affirmation of everyday life, along with the relative devaluing of the classical and medieval aristocratic ethic of military honour and intellectual contemplation, involved a new sensitivity to work and family life. Work and household chores were new values central to our well-being, to our "species being," as the young Marx expressed it, as activities which (ideally) should be performed in effective ways with dignity and without suffering. Knowledge should not be pursued for its own sake but should also be used, in the words of Francis Bacon, "to relieve the condition of mankind" (1989: 211–32).

Taylor traces the origins of this celebration of ordinary things to the insights of the Jewish-Christian-Islamic religious traditions, but he thinks that it was the Protestant reformers who elevated the value of daily work, health, and family. Taylor, rather than repeating the limited argument that Protestantism was a religion that encouraged capitalism as at once ascetic and this-worldly (Hall: 17), amplifies the ways Luther

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autonomous corporation […] There was no collective certification or validation that would have been the product of the collective action of a group of scholars. Nor were there bachelor's or doctoral degrees to be awarded upon completion of a course of study. In the European universities, by way of contrast, the license to teach was a certification of competence granted only by the head of the university, the chancellor after the candidate had been examined by the faculty and the chancellor. Such an examination could not take place in the madrasa, for, among other reasons, 'there was no faculty,' there were only individual masters, each variously authorized to transmit writings previously received through transmission, though also capable of dictating his own works" (161–64). See Edward Grant (1996: 33–53) for an excellent one-chapter summation of the invention of the university in Europe in the 12th century and the promotion of a liberal arts curriculum.

dignified the everyday, the bodily, and the homey lives of mothers, fathers, and children (211–7). This was a radically different conception from the Greek-Roman attitude that saw the family primarily in terms of the public duties it had to the state in the rearing of loyal children. If the young Hegel had celebrated the ancient conception of civic freedom and the unity of the private feelings of individuals and the public life of the state – against the "impoverishment and mutilation" of the modern bourgeois apolitical individual – the old Hegel concluded that this conception lacked true individuality.

The individuality of the Greeks, so we learn from Terry Pinkard's close reading of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, *The Sociality of Reason,* was attained and fulfilled only in their public roles and there was little recognition of the idiosyncratic aspects of the person.[23] The conception of inner freedom was hardly articulated in Greek culture, and the private sphere of the family was recognized only in its natural acts of sex and

[23] The ideas of the later Hegel challenge the Rousseauist-Marxist utopian critique of the separation of the state from civil society and of the distinction between the public and the private spheres. Rousseau lamented the decline of the small city-state, the polis, on the grounds that civil or private life had been separated from the public sphere. Modern man, as Marx agreed, had been divided into two distinct beings, specifically the "bourgeois" apolitical individual who is "free" to pursue his own egoistical economic interests, and the "citizen" who is granted formal rights to participate in the state. Real human liberation would arrive only when the private egoistical world of the market was abolished (but the early Marx spoke first of the "dissolution of the state" through radical democratic reform and not of the "dictatorship of the proletariat") which would allow all humans the possibility to participate directly in the collective decision making of the community (which would entail the abolition of the state as a separate entity). In his "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of the State", Marx put it this way: "Only in unlimited voting [direct democracy], active as well as passive, does civil society actually rise…to political existence as its true universal and essential existence" (1967: 202). In other words, civil society fulfills its true purpose, the universal communion of men, by turning itself into a society of citizens and thus abolishing its separate, independent character. "But the realization of this abstraction is also the transcendence of the abstraction [the transcendence of civil society as a private sphere]. By making its political existence actual as its true existence [by making civil society a true public society of citizens], civil society also makes its civil existence [its private existence] unessential in contrast to its political [public] existence. And with the one thing separated, the other, its opposite falls. Within the abstract political state the reform of voting is a dissolution of the state, but likewise the dissolution of civil society" (1967: 202).

The young Hegel and his German friends also fell for this cult of ancient citizenship. Georg Lukacs, in *The Young Hegel*, which he calmly wrote in the 1930s in Moscow as Stalin intensified his Terror against all remaining forms of private association, even private thoughts and feelings deemed to be at odds with the idea of the collective state, cites extensively Hegel's views on the republics of Greece and Rome: "As free men they obeyed laws they had given themselves, they obeyed men they had installed in positions of authority, they waged wars they had themselves resolved upon, gave up their property and their passions and sacrificed thousands of lives for the cause that was

reproduction, which in themselves were taken as natural facts about the way things were meant to be. The Greeks indeed had a rigid understanding of social roles, and different groups in society were expected to perform certain roles because that was just the way things were done. The family was not conceived as a sphere for the fulfillment of one's freedom; neither men nor women were expected to attain "free individuality" as "husband" or as "wife," as "mother" or as "father." But while men were able to have a life in the public realm and achieve their individuality, women were not given recognition and could not acquire a sense of self in their roles as "wife," "mother," and "daughter."[24]

With the arrival of Christianity, the ordinary life of the family was finally affirmed as a value, in the sacredness of the father Joseph, the mother Mary, and the baby Jesus. But while this new value contributed to a more respectful attitude to family relationships, the medieval world still tended to devalue women as temptresses and to exalt them as virgins. Then came a man named Martin Luther, a husband and the father of six children, who condemned the sellers of "pagan books that

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their own…in public, private and domestic life every man was free, each lived according to his own laws. The idea of his country, of the state was the invisible higher thing for which he laboured and which spurred him on; this was the ultimate purpose of the world…" (1976: 45). The young Hegel drew comparisons between Jesus and Socrates, but felt that if Jesus took his disciples out of society, Socrates brought them into public life. Socrates' disciples transcended disciple-hood; "many founded schools, several were great generals, statesmen, heroes of all kinds." Lukacs then contrasts Hegel's celebration of the ancient polis – its unity between the private feelings and passions of individuals and the public life of the state – with "the sentimental culture of the modern world [which] squanders lofty feelings on merely individual, merely private and hence unworthy objects" (52). But in a polemic the young Hegel directed at Schiller, we learn that Schiller (1796), much as he admired the everlasting greatness of Greek poetry, thought that there was a superior representation of love in modern poetry: "… we may still believe that in regard to the relations between the sexes and the emotion of love, nature can possess a nobler character than has been given it by the Ancients" (51). In the end, the older Hegel would come to agree with Schiller, that the Greek conception of freedom lacked a conception of individual volition and personal liberty.

[24] What about as "sister"? In a very profound reading of Sophocles' *Antigone*, Hegel says that Antigone's defiance of the edict of the state, that she should not perform burial rites for her dead brother, Polyneices, who had committed treason, was her way of becoming an individual within the family by serving familial interests against the public (male) edict – an individuality attainable only in relation to her brother as a "sister." For, while a Greek woman was restricted to the natural sphere of the family, she could gain a sense of self in her relation to her brother, to whom she was naturally connected but at the same time was free of bodily desire, and her brother's recognition of her was valuable, as contrasted to her relation to her sister, because he was an individual in the public realm and could thus value her in virtue of her individuality (Pinkard: 144–5).

treat of nothing but the depravity of womankind," who rejected Aristotle's view of women as botched males, and who criticized Jerome, Saint Augustine, and Gregory for "never having written anything good about marriage"(3–6). Steven Ozment has brought this point to light where he relates the progressive achievements of the Protestant reformers despite the still prevailing academic perspective which sees in the Reformation "a new level of bigotry and intolerance" and likes to emphasize the disarray and violence generated by the Religious Wars. In portraying the constructive side of Protestant thinking about family relationships, Ozment carefully documents how Luther and the reformers, by opposing monasticism and the celibate life, and taking a positive stand on clerical marriage, challenged the medieval view of women. By placing a new moral value on the estate of marriage and family life, the reformers cultivated a more respectful and sharing relationship between husbands and wives, and between parents and children. This new appreciation of women, Ozment notes, led to an expansion of the grounds for divorce in Protestant cities starting in the 16th century, as women gained an equal right with men to divorce and remarry in good conscience. Reformers also encouraged the education of girls to literacy in the vernacular, and although the intention was to educate girls to become pious housewives, these were on the whole domestic policies that, if viewed "less anachronistically against the religious culture of the Middle ages" rather than from the egalitarian perspective of today, were important steps in the direction of the liberation of women.[25]

Think also of the later contributions of the proponents of "modern" natural law in the 17th century, of Hugo Grotius (1583–1645) who was the first to articulate consciously "the idea of rights as natural attributes of individuals," in opposition to the medieval doctrine which held that "natural law points us toward perfecting our nature, or toward living as God's eternal law requires" (Schneewind: 73, 81). But even then, the Europe of Grotius, of the rise of modern science was still pre-modern. This is the view Jonathan Israel makes in his impressive, over 800-page work, *Radical Enlightenment*. Here he reveals, in breathtaking detail,

[25] This does not mean that protestant beliefs are somehow "superior" to Catholic beliefs; I only want to recognize the progressive character of the Reformation in certain spheres of life. John O'Malley writes that in Europe between 1500 and 1650 "almost a hundred new institutions were founded that with some stretching can be categorized as universities, about thirty under Protestant aegis and the rest under Catholic" (2004: 108).

that between the Reformation and the middle of the 17th century, most of Europe, with the partial exception of England and the United Provinces, was a civilization where "formal education, public debate, preaching, printing, book-selling … were closely supervised and controlled" by hegemonic Churches, Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist, and Anglican. He shows that the "decisive breakthrough of modern rationalism and secularization" occurred later in the period 1680–1750, for it was then that "the primacy of confessional theology and scholastic Aristotelianism … finally disintegrated" and that the radical ideas revolving around Spinoza and Spinozism became a European-wide movement that "demolished all legitimation of monarchy, aristocracy, woman's subordination to man, ecclesiastical authority, and slavery" (3–22).

But if the pre-modern world had been firmly abandoned, the modern one had yet to be completed, or so we learn from Jerome Schneewind's equally impressive book, *The Invention of Autonomy*. He thinks it was Immanuel Kant's philosophy (1724–1804) that finally brought us "to a distinctively modern way of understanding ourselves as moral agents," for it was Kant who "invented" the truly modern idea of morality as self-legislation, and taught us that moral judgments, if they are to be truly free, cannot be found in anything outside the human rational will (3–6). This idea that all individuals are equally capable of moral self-governance was very different from the ancient Greek idea of freedom. The Greeks lacked a fully articulated concept of moral self-determination. Their society did not encourage a conception of inner conscience and self-conscious reflection on whether what one was doing was really right. If Socrates represented defiance of convention, of the pieties of the ancestors, he did not argue that every person should have the legal right to do what he believes to be his moral duty. The society of his time could not accommodate and sustain his form of self-reflection, and thus it sentenced him to death. But the world to which Kant owed his education was coeval with the French Revolution of 1789, and this revolution institutionalized his Enlightenment discourse of moral autonomy and cultivated a public sphere in which practical questions and political decisions were open to discussion.

Drawing on the Stoic idea that freedom comes out of an inner "directing mind" as the only "will that wills itself," Kant went on to argue that "we" humans are equal in the degree to which we are rational agents who can think through for ourselves what values we wish to follow and accept in the conduct of our lives. Being rational means we are capable of self-governing ourselves, establishing for ourselves what is right. The

very idea that we are rational agents implies that we can think of ourselves as acting under rules of our own choice, that we can govern ourselves morally by imposing a moral law on ourselves, a law which gives rise to an obligation, or a necessity to act in a certain way. To the degree, then, that our moral values are an expression of our self-determination as rational beings, these values cannot be grounded (i) on any empirical fact about what is pleasurable and what is painful to us; (ii) on any contingent custom/norm practiced by a particular culture; (iii) on any psychological disposition, however benevolent, which comes from our personalities; or, (iv) on any obligation imposed by some natural law or supreme legislator beyond our reason. We are speaking of a self-imposed moral obligation regardless of what the self wants, regardless of feelings of love, loyalty, friendship, or generosity; for morality, if it is to be universal, cannot be dependent on any subjectively contingent factor. Neither can this moral obligation be defined by any state of affairs it might bring about; it has to be defined a priori by the willing agent. And it has to be categorical: do it because you have willed it as a rational agent to be the right thing to do (Kant 1993).

Kant sought to formulate a moral law that could be universalized, coming up with the imperative: "Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end and never simply as a means" (1993: 36). But this categorical law was purely formal insomuch as it presumed the existence of a rational autonomous will irrespective of culture and history – as if humans were always ready to self-govern themselves. This is what we learn from a reading of Pinkard's book, *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason*: Kant's principle of moral self-legislation is purely formal and subjectivist in its presupposition that the determination of what is right and good is a pure act of willing by an abstract agent rather than the achievement of the historical development of a concrete culture. The project of self-determination is modern and Western. The philosophy of Kant has to be seen as a high spiritual expression of the self-knowledge of the European community in the modern era. The idea that all individuals should always be treated as persons and never as means presupposes the rise of the West. The self-legislating individual is not natural but constructed out of a historically specific ethical community, the institutions of the modern compassionate family, the modern market society, and the modern constitutional state (294–303).

Western civilization has always been revolutionary. Since the dawn of Greek culture in the 8th century, since Hesiod and Homer lifted

Antiquity's myths, gods, and heroes into the bright light of understanding and humanization, the spirit of the West has been essentially and ever creative. Any serious scholar who respects the life of the mind can only marvel at the ceaseless and multifarious intellectual history of Western civilization in the wake of Kant's call to humans to dare to have the courage to use their own reason. This call was soon followed by a challenge against the Enlightenment itself in the Romantic Movement which blossomed in the early 1800s and which, in Taylor's eyes (1989: 368–90), deeply shaped the way we contemporaries think about personal fulfillment, expressive individuation, artistic and sensual originality. And this was just the beginning of a remarkable intellectual and artistic explosion in the next two centuries: quantum physics, phenomenology, surrealism, impressionism, logical-positivism, structuralism, realism, cubism, pragmatism, symbolic interactionism, Keynesianism, psychoanalysis, hermeneutics, deconstruction and more. The revolution of steam did set Europe on a different economic path, but it was one (and let us not ignore the revolutions of electricity, the internal combustion engine, and nuclear energy) of many other fascinating transformations in the rise of the West. What requires explanation is why Western culture, in contrast to the virtues of serene acceptance, calmness or composure one finds in Eastern religions, has always been charged with tension, always striving to transcend itself, and thus always engaged in a fight against itself – a fight that would culminate in the nihilism, cultural relativism, weariness, and lack of faith in Western civilization that dominates today.[26]

[26] Amartya Sen (2000) tries to challenge the presence of a "rigid dichotomy" between an Asia seen as favoring order and a Western world seen as favoring freedom. He questions the idea that liberty and individual autonomy were part of a Western heritage extending back over millennia. These values were of much recent origin, emerging only after the Enlightenment. Before the Enlightenment, he argues, there were only certain "constitutive elements" of liberalism. Having thus broken up the idea of freedom into separate elements spread over time, Sen adds that in Asia (in Ashoka's and Akbar's India, for example) there were also certain "constitutive elements" of liberalism: tolerance and egalitarianism, just as in the West there were certain authoritarian elements. The logic of this argument is the same as the one which drove the Frankfurt School to call American society totalitarian because there were certain totalitarian elements in its corporate culture, or to identify (as Chomsky and his acolytes do) McCarthyism with the Gulag Archipelago; a point well made by Jean-Francois Revel in *The Totalitarian Temptation* (1978). Any culture/religion is, at its very root and essence, a normatively constructed set of beliefs. They all cultivate moral values that champion certain behaviors over others. The rulers of agrarian civilizations want order, peaceful coexistence, administrative efficiency, prosperity in agriculture, and thus the promotion of the "common good". This does not mean that we should read back into these common preoccupations Enlightenment values.

CHAPTER SIX

THE RESTLESSNESS OF THE WESTERN SPIRIT FROM A HEGELIAN PERSPECTIVE

> It is not any particular set of institutions, ideas or technologies that mark out the West but its inability to come to a rest. No other civilization has ever approached such restless instability…In this, far more than in any particular intellectual, institutional, or technological expression… lies the uniqueness of Western civilization. William McNeill, *Rise of the West*

> Why is it that Europe alone among the civilizations of the world has been continually shaken and transformed by an energy of spiritual unrest that refuses to be content with the unchanging law of social tradition which rules the oriental culture? Christopher Dawson, *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*

> The principle of the European mind is self-conscious Reason which is confident that for it there can be no insuperable barrier and which therefore takes an interest in everything in order to become present to itself therein…In Europe, therefore, there prevails this infinite thirst for knowledge…The European is interested in the world, he wants to know it, to make this Other confronting him his own, to bring to view the genus, law, universal, thought, the inner rationality, in the particular forms of the world. As in the theoretical, so too in the practical, the European mind…subdues the outer world to its ends with an energy which has ensured for it the mastery of the world. Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*

Change without Progress in the East

The argument of the previous chapter was that the development of a liberal-democratic culture was an indispensable component of the rise of the West. This chapter will add that the intellectual and artistic originality of the West was another crucial component. Why the great accomplishments of humanity in the sciences and arts have been overwhelmingly European? My first task is to show that Europe was in fact the most creative culture of the world. My second, and main task, is to start explaining why this was the case, in comparative contrast to the more serene and deferential Eastern spirit.

The Ancient Near East was the cradle of human civilization, the location of multiple discoveries, the plough, metallurgy, sailing ships, writing, calendars, legal codes, and arithmetic. These, however, were achievements of the Bronze Age. Thereafter the Near East would see no major revolutions in philosophical, literary, and scientific outlooks. There would be change, to be sure, but in the form of revivals, refinements, and extensions of the existing traditions. The Neo-Assyrians (934–610 BC), for example, brought about first the recovery and then the rapid expansion of the old Assyrian state, which would come to control, by 700 BC, either directly or indirectly, much of southern Asia Minor, Syria, and Palestine, including Egypt for a while (Kuhrt 2002b: 473–545). They created "the most rationalized, powerful, state the world had yet seen" (McNeill 1963: 148). They designed new cities with great walls and gates and magnificent palaces. They cultivated literature and scholarship, and under King Assurbanipal (685–627) they built the first systematically organized library in the Near East at Nineveh, out of which recent archeologists have unearthed some 5,000 literary and scholarly texts. However, as McNeill has observed, the literature, learning, and religion of the neo-Assyrians would remain as it had been in the world of Mesopotamia since 3000 BC: the exclusive preserve of priests (148). The most prominent scholars who formed the inner circle of learned advisers to the king were interpreters of celestial and territorial omens. Kuhrt has described them as follows: "a chief liver diviner, a chief exorcist, a personal exorcist whom the king consulted about the health of the royal children, and several more exorcists, two doctors, a chief chanter and at least two astrologers" (524). Marc Van De Mieroop has noted:

> The function of the library was practical. The scholarship undertaken was focused on understanding the signs of the gods that could be seen everywhere in the surrounding world and which had to be properly read. In order to further their knowledge, scholars all over the empire reported what they observed, such as astronomical occurrences, and interpreted events based on their understanding of the omens…The final goal of all this work was to protect the king and the state, and to ensure that he was not unaware of any impending danger (2004: 249; my italics).

Under the astute leadership of Nebuchadnezzar II (r. 604–562 BC), the Neo-Babylonians rose again to become the representatives of one of the greatest cities, Babylonia – a cosmopolitan center of world trade, linking Egypt, India, Iran, and Syria by land and sea routes. The marvelously tiled Ishtar Gate, which provided a spectacular entrance to

this legendary city, and opened onto a grand avenue leading to the temple of the god Marduk, was undoubtedly a major architectural act. Astronomical calculations, predictions of eclipses, and the refinement of calendars continued under the neo-Babylonians, but no new intellectual currents would emerge (Kuhrt: 603–22).

Similarly, Ancient Persia, starting with the Achaemenid ruler Cyrus the Great around 550 BC, created an empire of unprecedented scale, ruled by an efficient network of royal inspectors and a chancery with large archives and scribes. It built nearly 1700 miles of road connecting the empire from Susa to Sardis in Western Anatolia (Kuhrt: 647–701). This empire also witnessed the spread of a monotheistic religion, Zoroastrianism, which developed the original idea that there is only one universal and transcendental God, Ahura Mazda, who is the source of all that is good. Persia nourished an artistic style that would draw creatively from diverse cultural backgrounds while furnishing its own identity (Curtis and Tallis 2005). Yet, for all this, ancient Persia would carve out no new patterns. Achaemenid art would remain "an official, court art…an old, not a new art," gathering together and summarizing the traditions of the Mesopotamians, Egyptians, and pre-Achaemenid Persians (Moscati 1962: 301–6). In the Orient at large, not just Persia, the artist was a craftsman who worked to order and followed a model, mostly anonymous; the artist's "creative personality was not accorded the importance" which it came to have in ancient Greece (Moscati: 317–18). During the Sassanid Empire (224–651 BC), Iranian culture would draw again on diverse traditions, from Roman to Hellenistic to Indian motifs and concepts, but the one noticeable phenomenon would be the institutionalization of Zoroastrian ritual and theology as state orthodoxy (Frye 1963).

Ancient Egypt, as McNeill has observed, saw "little perceptible change" (144) after the age of Rameses (1301–1234 BC). Thereafter the Egyptians remained "a people apart, peculiar unto themselves, preservers of an age old tradition, makers of nothing new" (84). This view is reinforced by Jan Assmann's study, *The Mind of Egypt* (2002). He notes that the pharaonic history of Egypt shows an "unchanging collective identity," "unchanging symbolic meaning-world," across a period of three and a half thousand years. From the beginning of the Old Kingdom to the time of the Ptolemy dynasty, he detects in the language, knowledge, and memory of the Egyptians the same ideal wherein an individual's life was seen as synonymous with the security and justice ensured by the Pharaoh. For all the numerous dynasties

(and notwithstanding Amenhotep's short-lived effort (1526–1509 BC) to elevate *Aten*, "disc" of the sun, above the previously more important god known as *Re*) Egypt's mind-set would stay relatively constant until the arrival of Hellenistic culture in the 4th century BC, which would remain, in any case, a "Greek elite" phenomenon located in the city of Alexandria.

Until the golden age of Islam, the Near Eastern world would cling deferentially to the old institutional and intellectual models handed down from the past. There would be development without progression: increases in the size of political units, in the size and density of trade networks, in the size of population, and in the extensions of the existing technological paradigms. During the Middle Ages, Islam played a considerable role in the transmission and refinement of Greek science and philosophy, and, under the Turkic Ottomans, expanded geographically until the 17th century. During the modern era, Asia in general saw the extension of wider commercial networks, including rising rates of agricultural productivity. Nevertheless, by the end of the 13th century, both the Islamic and Chinese worlds would cease to exhibit much originality and novelty in the sciences and the arts. The expansion displayed by modern China was based, by and large, on the extension of the same technological tool-kit already present in Sung times. The intellectual traditions set down in ancient China – Confucianism, Legalism, Taoism (and later Buddhism) – would persist in their essentials until the impact of the West would occasion radical novelties. Subsequent alterations and revisions (Neo-Confucianism) would involve slight variations within the conceptual framework of these original schools.[1]

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[1] Frederick Mote, in his book, *Intellectual Foundations of China* (1989), which celebrates the "literary" quality and "vitality" of China's culture, and asks Western readers to lay aside their "most fundamental assumptions about time, space, causality, human nature, and history" (xii), writes nevertheless of the "unbroken thread" of China's philosophical history after ancient times. The ancient conception of the world "developed…without any fundamental modification other than its refinement and more detained articulation" (14). Scott Morton and Charlton Lewis comment that this endurance has "unfortunately given the impression of a perpetually static civilization, obscuring the remarkable progress made by the Chinese in social forms, administrative methods, and technological inventions from Neolithic times, up to, say, the thirteenth century" (2004, 100). They agree, in other words, that after the Sung Dynasty there was a lack of creativity in spite of the demographic and economic extensions we examined in earlier chapters.

Let me draw attention as well to the conclusions reached by the Perry Anderson (1987); who specifically set out to repudiate the concept of an "Asiatic Mode of

Measuring Human Accomplishments

To varying degrees, all the Oriental civilizations had more in common with each other than with the West. Europe alone would display a fairly continuous sequence of novelties, imaginative personalities, and revolutions in the sciences and the arts. But who is to say that Europe was more accomplished culturally than Arabia, Japan, or China? One of the most damaging consequences of multicultural relativism is the claim that there are no standards by which to adjudicate the aesthetics, the genuineness of purpose, and the intellectual depth of different philosophical outlooks, musical compositions, or even scientific ideas. The dominant trend in our universities – in our centers of "higher learning" – is to argue that each culture and each era has its own standards of truth and aesthetic appreciation. All cultures are equally praiseworthy and exemplary. It is not possible to distinguish "greater" from "lesser" achievements. The "diversity" establishment warns us that to make qualitative judgments is ethnocentric and politically retrogressive. I believe that it is possible to make studious and intelligent judgments in matters of excellence. Evaluating the comparative cultural contributions of the classical Greeks and the Mayas need not be based on arbitrary standards of adjudication.

Production," or the theory of "Oriental Despotism". He sought to question, in other words, the general observations of Enlightenment thinkers such as Montesquieu (and Marx) that Eastern social formations, after they had reached a certain level of civilization, had come to exhibit, in the modern era, a cyclical pattern of change lacking in dynamic or cumulative development. Anderson went as far as the evidence would allow him in highlighting, for example, the mercantile enterprises and monetary circulation of Muslim cities and the expansionary movements of the three powerful Islamic Empires of Ottoman Turkey, Safavid Persia, and Mughal India. But in the end he reached the following conclusion: Islamic cities were not accompanied by any municipal autonomy or civic order, merchants had little corporate identity; "the commercial vitality of the Arab epoch, which had coursed through the civilization of classical Islam, now progressively ebbed away" (515). "Military rigidity, ideological zealotry and commercial lethargy thus became the usual norms of government in Turkey, Persia, and India" (517). Likewise, after writing that "the Chinese Empire of the Sung epoch was unquestionably the wealthiest and most advanced economy on the globe in the 11th and 12th centuries" (530) – even asserting rhetorically that "the greatest spread and highest prosperity of Chinese civilization was achieved during the 18th century (495) – Anderson went on to stress Chinese "involution and obscurantism" during the Ming dynasty (534); "the whole pattern of agrarian development was virtually devoid of significant technological improvements, after the Sung epoch" (539); "Imperial China appears, in effect, to have taken a curiously spiral form after the great socio-economic revolutions of the Sung age…It repeated its motions on ascending levels, without ever twisting way into new figure altogether" (540). This, in effect, is what the theory of Oriental Despotism claimed.

There is no denying that making judgments is an extremely difficult task requiring expertise beyond the ability of any one person. Fortunately, there is a comprehensive book by Charles Murray, *Human Accomplishment, Pursuit of Excellence in the Arts and Sciences, 800 BC to 1950* (2003), which systematically arranges "data that meet scientific standards of reliability and validity" (xvi) for the purpose of relating the story of human accomplishments across the centuries. This 668-page book is the first effort to quantify "as facts" the accomplishment of individuals and countries across the world in the arts and sciences by calculating the amount of space allocated to these individuals in reference works, encyclopedias, and dictionaries. Murray defines excellence in the sciences in a pragmatic manner as involving the discovery of truth by assembling ideas that are in agreement with one's experimental and practical goals. He believes that scientific ideas can be, and are in fact, judged in relation to whether they reveal, corroborate and verify significant aspects of "reality" (60). He defines "high aesthetic quality" as "the combined evaluations of experts" (68). He acknowledges that people "have differing capacities for discerning" aesthetic qualities, but adds that the nature of a person's appreciation of a work of art "varies with the level of knowledge that a person brings to it" (65). Having expertise in a particular field of art teaches one to make disinterested aesthetic judgments, which are "not only possible but common". It is the "relationship of expertise to judgment [which] forms a basis for treating excellence in the arts as a measurable trait" (66). Those who know most about an artistic field have a deeper understanding of the intrinsic qualities of the works produced in their field. There are many ways experts can be foolhardy in their evaluations, however Murray believes that the consensus one finds among critics across time does reflect qualities that inhere in a work; the consensus is not subjective and arbitrary (68).[2]

Murray then moves on to a technical discussion of his statistical framework for operationalizing his definitions of excellence (72–106, 461–511). Suffice to say that his inventories of the most significant figures in the arts and sciences are a "natural consequence of the

[2] Murray relies on David Hume's distinction between two aspects of taste in art: "sentiment" and judgment." Sentiment is right to the person who has the sentiment, but judgment is an effort to make a true assessment regarding the quality of the work of art, which requires expertise knowledge (63–65).

attempt by knowledgeable critics, devoted to their subject, to give the most attention to the most important people" (75). He relies on the judgments of critics who believe that "excellence" can be ascertained with a high degree of impartially, and who have a common "classical" understanding of what constitutes distinction in their respective fields. He does not rely on the judgment of postmodernists who question the idea of truth, and believe that "everything-is-equally-valid-in-its-own-context" (70).

The expert sources Murray relies on to generate his inventory of "significant figures," "the giants," and "significant events" in the arts and sciences are from encyclopedias, biographical dictionaries, chronology of events, and anthologies. The total number of sources he relies on (as listed in Appendix 3 of his book) is 183, which is a lot. They include such references as the 18-volume *Dictionary of Scientific Biography* (produced by an international consortium of scholars (1980–1990) laboring for more than four decades), the 17-volume *Enciclopedia Universale dell'Arte* (1959), and the *Harvard Biographical Dictionary of Music* (1996), which contains entries for 2,242 composers (108–10). He also uses historical surveys, such as F. Copleston's 8-volume *A History of Philosophy* (1975), K. Jasper's 4-volume *Great Philosophers* (1995), and M. Loehr's *The Great Painters of China* (1980). Murray addresses basic questions regarding the validity and reliability of the measures of eminence he uses, including whether his inventories are likely to suffer from the "Eurocentric" biases of some of the sources. To address the latter problem, he consults sources written by non-Europeans, though these were available in translations only for the arts and philosophy inventories, but not for the sciences.

He also avoids a Eurocentric bias by creating *separate* compilations for *each* of "the giants" in the *arts* of the Arab world, China, India, and Japan, as well as of the "giants" of Europe (84). In this respect, Murray recognizes that one cannot apply one uniform standard of excellence for the diverse artistic traditions of the world. But before considering his inventories of artistic achievements across the world, let us consider the *worldwide* inventory of "the giants" he produces for each of the natural sciences. These inventories are comparable insofar as scientists themselves have come to accept the same methods and categories. The most striking feature of his list "the giants" in the sciences (the top 20 in Astronomy, Physics, Biology, Medicine, Chemistry, Earth Sciences, and Mathematics) is that they are all (excepting one Japanese)

Western (122–29). Consider the list for the top 20 in the "combined sciences": Newton, Galileo, Aristotle, Kepler, Lavoisier, Descartes, Huygens, Laplace, Einstein, Faraday, Pasteur, Ptolemy, Hooke, Leibniz, Rutherford, Euler, Darwin, Berzelius, Euclid, and Maxwell.

Now, Murray recognizes that there were major scientific achievements in the East, as is evident from a series of lists he produces of the "central events" in the world for each of the sciences. For example, in chemistry, he lists two central events in the Arab world, namely, Jabir inb Hayyan's preparation of the first pure acid (in 750), and an unnamed producer of the first concentrated alcohol (in 900). In physics, he mentions Alhazen's work, *Opticae Thesaurus,* and its discussion of the properties of lenses and the source of light rays (in 1025). In mathematics, he lists (i) Zu Chongzhi's calculation that the value of pi lay between 3.1415926 and 3.1415927, (ii) two central achievements produced in India between 500 and 700 (a full and consistent use of zero), and (iii) three discoveries produced in Persia (solving all equations of the first and second degree with positive roots, the origin of algebra, and the solution of cubic equations) between 700 and 1100.[3] In technology, the period before 1110 is noticeably dominated by "central events" in China, with a few in Egypt, Asia Minor and the Levant, and with only one from Greece (159–204). However, the rest of the total 369 central events that Murray mentions are located in European countries (with a growing proportion in the USA after 1900).

Murray concludes that "whether measured in people or events, 97 percent of accomplishment in the scientific inventories occurred in Europe and North America" from 800 BC to 1950 (252). One can debate the order of ranking of the top 20, as Murray acknowledges, but I would argue that, in general, these lists capture rather well the most important figures and events. These are not arbitrary inventories. Murray mentions James McClellan and Harold Dorn's textbook

[3] An serious work on the contributions of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Babylonia, India, Islam, and China to Mathematics is Gheverghese Joseph's *The Crest of the Peacock, Non-European Roots of Mathematics* (2000). Regrettably, Joseph accuses European historians of promoting a "Eurocentric" view for ignoring "a considerable body of research pointing to the development of mathematics" outside Europe (5). Two sources are cited to support this claim, a book published in 1953, and another "short account" published in 1908 (4–5). However, the bibliography of Joseph's book shows that he managed to write his non-European account by using mostly Western-authored sources.

Science and Technology in World History (1999), written, according to the publisher's blurb, as a survey "that does not present the historical development of science simply as a Western phenomenon." Upon examining the 10 people with the most index entries in this text, Murray notes that they are entirely from Europe. He also notes that of the figures listed in the text's index, 97 percent originate from Europe and the United States – the exact same number yielded by Murray's inventories (255).[4]

He estimates that the overwhelming role of Europe does not alter when one considers only the arts inventories, particularly after 1400. Although he does not compare their achievements but compiles separate lists for each civilization, he notes that the sheer number of "significant figures" in the arts is higher in the West in comparison to the *combined* number of the other civilizations (113, 131–42). In Literature, the number in the West is 835, whereas the number in India, the Arab World, China, and Japan combined is 293. In the Visual Arts, it is 479 for the West as compared to 192 for China and Japan combined (with no significant figures listed for India and the Arab World). In Music, "the lack of a tradition of named composers in non-Western civilization means that the Western total of 522 significant figures has no real competition at all" (259).

Another statistic worth considering is that just four countries in the small continent of Europe (Britain, France, Germany, and Italy) account for 72 percent of all the significant figures (295–303). One can certainly quibble with Murray's inventories, particularly his rankings of the top 20, but unless one rejects the idea of excellence itself, it is difficult to imagine a list on the giants of literature excluding, for example, Shakespeare, Dante, and Virgil. I would argue that these numbers are no less significant, and perhaps more reliable, than the economic indices revisionists concentrate on. They are more noteworthy in addressing the higher things in life and what was really unique about Western civilization.

Murray advances as well the more interpretative argument that the West was responsible, either wholly or at least partially, for 12 of the

[4] Murray did not use this text as one of the sources to create his inventories because this text is intended as a introductory college textbook (603). See Appendix 2 for an explanation of his criteria of "qualified sources". I should add that of the 36 science reference books Murray drew upon, 28 were published after 1980, by which time historians were eagerly trying to avoid Eurocentric perspectives.

14 "meta-inventions" in the arts and sciences. By "meta-inventions" he means those exceptional points in the history of accomplishment where entirely new realms of potential attainment were opened up (209). His list of 14 "meta-inventions include the following:

- the invention of Artistic Realism, Greece, circa 500 BC
- the invention of Linear Perspective, Italy, circa 1413
- the invention of Abstraction, France, last half of 19C
- the invention of Polyphony, Central France, 11C–13C
- the invention of Drama, Greece, in the century following 534 BC, and India, date unknown
- the invention of the Novel, Europe from 1500, culminating in England, 1740–1749
- the invention of Meditation, India culminating circa 200 BC
- the invention of Logic, Athens, 400 BC
- the invention of Ethics. China, India, and Greece, 520–320 BC
- the invention of the Mathematical Proof, Greece, circa 585 BC
- the invention of Arabic Numerals, including Zero in India, no later than 8C
- the Calibration of Uncertainty, Europe, 1565–1657
- the invention of the Secular Observation of Nature, Greece and China, circa 600 BC
- the invention of Scientific Method, Europe, 1589–1687

I will leave it to readers to examine Murray's book (209–244) for descriptions of each of these inventions. The question that now arises is the following: what explanation does he offer for this remarkable "divergence" in human accomplishment between the West and the Rest? His answer is that human accomplishment is determined by the degree to which cultures promote or discourage autonomy and purpose. Accomplishments have been "more common and more extensive in cultures where doing new things and acting autonomously [were] encouraged than in cultures [where they were] disapprove[d]" (395). Human beings have also been "most magnificently productive and reached their highest cultural peaks in the times and places where humans have thought most deeply about their place in the universe and been most convinced they have one." The following are the basic comparative historical points Murray makes on purpose and autonomy. Both Buddhism and Daoism taught that purposeful action on this earth was a delusion; they encouraged the virtues of serene acceptance, gentleness, and passivity as a way of comprehending the universe and one's role in it. The progress achieved in China and Japan was made consensually and hierarchically by individuals motivated to

become a valued part of a tradition by imitating their past masters. Islam gave its believers a sense of purpose and energy that helped foster the achievements of its golden age. But Islam saw God as a deity who is not bound by immutable laws, and which emphasized obedience to God's rules and submission to his will against any presumption that humans could comprehend his works or glorify God with their understanding of nature. Islamic, Chinese, Japanese, and Indian cultures were all highly familistic, hierarchical, and consensual cultures (400–01). Europe was different in the way it was able to integrate purpose with autonomy. This integration produced "the defining cultural characteristic of European civilization, individualism" (401). The Greeks laid the foundations of human rational autonomy but their culture was still not individualistic, insomuch as it did not conceive the individual apart from his public role as a member of the polis. It was Christianity that "differentiated European accomplishment from that of all other cultures around the world" (402). This did not happen immediately, but with the consolidation of Roman Catholicism and the development of a philosophical outlook, notably by Thomas Aquinas (1226–1274) who stressed that "that human intelligence is a gift of God, and that to apply human intelligence to understanding the world is not an affront to God but is pleasing to him". This outlook, adopted by the Church, also taught "that human autonomy is a gift of God, and that the only way in which humans can realize the relationship with God that God intends is by exercising that autonomy" (403). However, the full development of individualism came with Protestantism and its encouragement of industriousness, persistent action, and empirical utilitarianism.

But, according to Murray, one of the unintended consequences of Protestantism was its contribution to the secularization of Europe. After Darwin, Europe was still inhabited by dutiful, hard-working elites, "but their sense of vocation had diminished" (407); and, by the early 20th century, "it became fashionable to see humans as acting out neuroses and subconscious drives. God was mostly dead among the European creative elites; morality became relative." This is how Murray explains the decline in creativity after 1950. As regards our immediate subject, I am persuaded that Murray has hit upon one of the critical variables – individualism – that help explain European uniqueness. *Human Accomplishment*, however, was not intended as an explanation of the rise of the West, as Murray himself says (xvii). Using this book

in this way (given its singular focus on intellectual and artistic merit) would give it the tenor of the older-style textbooks on Western civilization which presented an "idealized, and hence essentially false," picture of the West (Davies: 1–31). It would also place it under what Gress (1998) dubbed the "Grand Narrative" with its "false dichotomy between some high principles, which existed outside history, and a flawed reality, characterized by inequality, prejudice and war," which I criticized in chapter four.

Murray's book is an indispensable effort to measure Western cultural achievement from a comparative perspective, and it does offer valuable insights on why the West was exceptionally creative in the arts and sciences. But its conceptualization of Western "individualism" is limited to its role in fostering intellectual and artistic creativity. Murray pays no attention to the accomplishments of individuals in other human endeavors such as warfare and empire-making.[5] As it is, Murray's definition of Western individualism, with its emphasis on purposive Christian autonomy, encounters obvious difficulties in trying to grapple with an Athenian culture that was not fully individualistic (in his judgment) and purposive, but which still produced a rather high number of giants. It also leaves him with little to say about the Hellenistic period (323 BC to about 146 BC) and the Roman Epoch, both of which produced a high number of giants, including Euclid (ranked 3rd in mathematics), Archimedes (ranked 5th in Technology and 20th Mathematics), Hipparchus (10th in Astronomy), Ptolemy (6th in Astronomy), Pliny (19th in Biology), Plotinus (19th in Philosophy), Virgil (4th in Literature), Horace (16th in Literature) – not to mention numerous significant figures (Ovid, Euripides, Cicero, Lucretius, Aristarchus) as well as giants in fields such as History (Livy and Tacitus) for which Murray did not produce inventories.

[5] How about a list of the greatest heroes? Lucy Hughes-Hallett chooses Alcibiades, Cato, El Cid, Francis Drake, Wallenstein, and Garibaldi as the central subjects of her book *Heroes. Saviours, Traitors and Supermen* (2004). There are certainly heroes in other cultures; but heroes in general tend to be isolated characters, not heads of state or servants of the state; "the responsibilities of government do not combine well with the individualism expected of the hero" (6). Hughes-Hallet notes that "the notion of the hero – that some men are born special – is radically inegalitarian, and the majority of heroes throughout history have been, or pretended to be, or aspired to become, aristocrats" (9). In chapters seven and eight I will argue that Western culture was peculiarly aristocratic from its beginnings.

The Historiography of Europe's Revolutions

Human Accomplishment is a statistical assessment, not an attempt to explain the history of individualism and less so the uniqueness of the West in terms of its economic, institutional, and cultural history. The book leaves out all the transformations, renaissances, and revolutions historians have identified with the making of the West: Why did the voyages of global discovery "take" in early modern Europe and not in China? What was the contribution of the Reformation to the making of the modern self? Why did the Newtonian Revolution elude other civilizations? Alas, it is also the case that no historical work has addressed all these questions and transformations together. While countless books have been published on one or two major European transformations, no scholar has tried to explain, or pose as a general question, the persistent creativity of Europe from ancient to modern times across all the fields of human thought and action. The norm has been for specialists in one period or transformation to write about (or insist upon) the "radical" or "revolutionary" significance of the period or theme they happen to be experts on.

Consider the following numerous interpretations, starting with Hanson; he has argued that consensual government, civil liberties, decisive warfare, and a free market economy originated in ancient Greece, and "would form the later core foundation of Western civilization" (1999).[6] Roger Scruton has emphasized the significance of Rome in its creation of a secular system of governance anchored on the "autonomous principles of judicial reasoning and an explicit statement of the law" (2002: 22). Nemo has highlighted the Roman "invention" of the legal persona together with an intricate system of legal concepts that reflected the individuality of each person by separating "very precisely what is yours from what is mine: to each by right" (2004). Rodney Stark, on the other hand, has insisted that Christianity "created Western civilization" by nourishing a theological outlook of "God's nature, intentions, and demands" consistent with the rational investigation of nature. The "rise of science, according to Stark, was *not* an extension of classical learning, [but] the natural outgrowth of Christian

[6] The list of books which have celebrated Greece as the "cradle" of the West is endless; two more examples are Charles Freeman's *The Greek Achievement: The Foundations of the Western World* (1999), and Bruce Thornton's *Greek Ways: How the Greeks Created Western Civilization* (2000).

doctrine" (2003: 157).[7] Grant (2001) and Woods (2005), for their part, have emphasized the Catholic ideas, laws, and institutions that "built Western Civilization." Berman, too, has looked to the role of the Church but has restricted the "crucial" period to the years of the Papal Revolution between 1050 and 1150, which laid the basis for the "modern state, the modern church, modern philosophy, the modern university, and modern literature"(1984: 4). John Hale (1994) has followed an older interpretation in concluding that the Renaissance was a whole new epoch in the way Europeans came to forge a distinctive identity as the inhabitants of "Europe," a "civilization" that was different from the Greco-Roman past and from the Papal-centered world of Latin Christendom. Similarly, John Headley (2008) has traced the roots of the idea of a common humanity and the principles of political dissent to the Renaissance.[8]

Every period of Western history has had an advocate: For G.R. Elton it was the Reformation that prepared the ground "for the secularization of Europe" (1963: 279). Steven Ozment (1993) has also reasoned that the Protestants were the true progenitors of such modern values as social reform, individual religious conviction, hard work, and the rejection of corruption and empty ritual.[9] Herbert Butterfield, in stark contrast, has estimated that the Scientific Revolution "outshines everything since the rise of Christianity and reduces the Renaissance and

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[7] Scruton emphasizes as well the Christian spirit of forgiveness and the Christian distinction between *regnum* and *sacerdotium* (2002: 35–40).

[8] Lise Jardine has pointed to another, more contemporaneous aspect in observing that "the seeds of our own exuberant multiculturalism and bravura consumerism were planted in the European Renaissance" (1996: 34). Burckhardt's view that the Italian Renaissance saw "the first modern individuals" once held much conviction but in 1927 Charles Haskins published a book pointing to a more "foundational" renaissance in the 12th century associated with the emergence of vernacular languages, the revival of Greek science and philosophy, Latin classics, poetry, and Roman law. Haskins reminded historians that "the continuity of history rejects violent contrasts between successive periods" (Haskins 1972: v). I agree, in the paradoxical sense, that Western history has been singularly discontinuous.

[9] Of course, it was Weber who first assigned a considerable role to Protestantism, but others soon followed with their own versions; in *The Cultural Significance of the Reformation*, Karl Holl described the Reformation as initially setting "a rigid limit to the absolute power of the state." Further, he conceded "to the Reformation respect for being the first of all in modern times to have prepared the way for freedom of conscience in the state. All further victories with respect to tolerance rest on this first step…." ([1911] 1959: 53). More recently, Peter Harrison has argued that the Reformation was more important than the Renaissance in its demystification of the "book of nature" and the cultivation of a less contemplative view of science (1998).

Reformation to the rank of mere incidents, mere internal displacements" (1957: 7). Bernard Cohen has agreed, the story of Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, and Newton are testimony to "the creative accomplishment of the human spirit at its pinnacle" (1960: 190).[10] Christopher Hill, for his part, has drawn attention to the "Century of Revolution" between 1603 and 1714, as the "decisive" years in which the principle of "Divine Right" was "fatally wounded," and men of commercial property "won freedom from arbitrary taxation and arbitrary arrest, freedom from religious persecution, freedom to… elect [their] representatives [and] freedom to buy and sell" (1980: 254–265).[11] Paul Hazard, looking at a later period, has argued that "never was there a greater contrast, never a more sudden transition" than the one between 1680 and 1715, when "an hierarchical system ensured by authority [and] firmly based on dogmatic principle" gave way to enlightened inquiry and open debate (1935).[12] But Albert Soboul has embraced the French Revolution of 1789 as the "truly" radical one, in "wiping out every surviving feudal relic" and in promulgating the "rights of man" in general and the democratic ideal of "universal suffrage" (1975: 3–19). Cipolla has countered that "no revolution has been as dramatically revolutionary as the Industrial Revolution [which] transformed Man from a farmer-shepherd into a manipulator of machines by inanimate energy" (1973: 7–9). T. S Aston (1948) and W. W. Rostow (1960) have agreed that this revolution broke with a past in which 9 out of 10 Europeans lived in small towns and villages, and in which mortality rates and famines were recurrent realities.

Similar claims have been made about the establishment of a "modern capitalist world system," the "Military Revolution," the Romantic Movement, the German Philosophical Revolution from Kant to Hegel, the "Second" Industrial Revolution, and the First World War. The historiography of Western/European civilization is indeed filled with

[10] Many similar statements can be found in Floris Cohen's historiographical work on this revolution (1994). For J.H Parry, however, the age of exploration was the age which "saw not only the most rapid extension of geographical knowledge in the whole of European history; [but also] the beginnings of that close association of pure science, technology, and everyday work which is an essential characteristic of the modern Western world" (1964: 17).

[11] See also the recent book, cited in chapter two, by Pincus, *1688: the First Modern Revolution* (2009).

[12] Israel's *Radical Enlightenment*, mentioned in chapter five, may be read as an updated version of Hazard's book, with a greater focus on Spinoza's influence.

"foundations," "births," "origins," "creations," and "transitions."[13] What I find restrictive in all these authors is the supposition that Western uniqueness can be comprehended around one or a few turning points. It is not that these scholars have studied new developments or periods in isolation from preceding or subsequent changes. Cipolla has traced the "roots" of the Industrial Revolution "back to that profound change in ideas and social structures that accompanied the rise of the urban communes in Northern Italy, in Northern France and in the Southern Low Countries, between the 11th and the 13th centuries" (1973: 9). Ozment has carefully documented the roots of the Reformation in the spiritual and monastic currents of late medieval times (1980). White has looked back to the "Christian dogma of man's transcendence of, and rightful mastery over, nature," to explain Europe's "unmatched [technological] dynamism" after 1000 AD (1982: 90). Soboul has investigated the "transition from feudalism to capitalism" and the ideas of the *philosophes* to understand the origins of 1789. Jacob (1997) has addressed simultaneously the Baconian utilitarian ideal of knowledge, the Puritan emphasis on hard work, and the Anglican "liberal" consolidation after the Glorious Revolution of 1688 to account for the cultural roots of the first industrial revolution. Toby Huff (1993) has drawn attention to the Papal Revolution of the eleventh century to explain why modern Galilean science emerged in Europe rather than elsewhere.

Other scholars have actually looked across millennia, but only to emphasize the creativity of Europe in one cultural sphere: painting (Gombrich 1950), music (Grout and Palisca 1996); warfare (Hanson 2001) in science (Lindberg 1992), philosophy (Tarnas 1991), or technology (White 1982). What is missing is a full appreciation of the unparalleled degree to which the history of the West was filled with individuals persistently searching for new worlds, new religious visions and new styles of painting, architecture, music, science, philosophy, and literature – in comparative contrast, for example, to the history of China, where artistic and literary styles lasted for centuries (Chow 1994; Sullivan 1999).

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[13] To name a few more titles otherwise not listed in this book: Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom, 200–1000 AD* (2003); R. I. Moore, *The First European Revolution* (2000); David Levine, *At the Dawn of Modernity: Biology, Culture, and Material Life in Europe after the Year 1000* (2001); Thomas Kuhn, *The Copernican Revolution* (1957); George H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (1962); G. R. Elton, *The Tudor Revolution in Government* (1953); Perez Zagorin, *How the Idea of Religious Toleration Came to the West* (2003); Paoli Rossi, *The Birth of Modern Science* (2000); Roy Porter, *Enlightenment, Britain and the Creation of the Modern World* (2000).

I can think of only four individuals, two philosophers of history, one sociologist, and one world historian, who have spoken in a wide-ranging way of: i) the "infinite drive," "the irresistible trust" of the Occident, ii) the "energetic, imperativistic, and dynamic" soul of the West, iii) the "rational restlessness" of the West, iv) "the deep-rooted pugnacity and recklessness of Europeans" – Hegel, Spengler, Weber, and McNeill respectively. In the previous chapter, I delineated the essentials of Weber's thesis on the peculiar form of Western rationalism. I don't think I was able to extract from his writings an answer for why the West exhibited such a high degree of rationalism *in the first place*. I drew attention to his ideas on the rationalism of the Old Testament, the Judaic cultivation of a coherent doctrine on the purpose of life here on earth. I made reference to the affinities Weber noted between these Judaic beliefs and certain aspects of the Calvinist/Puritan version of Protestantism, its ascetic "worldly calling" for a methodical style of life. I suggested that Weber, in going back to Judaism, was indeed implying or considering the possibility that in this religion there was to be found the original source of the worldly ethos that promoted modern capitalism. However, I also suggested that the rationalist character of ancient Judaism and its connection to Christianity and Protestantism was one among other unrelated processes of rationalization. As Weber himself insisted, "the history of rationalism shows a development which by no means follows parallel lines in the various departments of life" (in Ritzer: 137). There were other lines of rationalization with independent sources: the rationalization of arithmetical calculations by the ancient Greeks, the systematic ordering of legal norms by the Romans, "the rational utilization of lines and spatial perspective – which the Renaissance created for us," the "transformation of the process of musical production into a calculable affair operating with known means, effective instruments, and understandable rules" (in Ritzer: 145), and the professionalization of law and administration by nation-states. I could not find in Weber an account of the ultimate sources of these autonomous currents of rationalization. On one occasion Weber did ponder whether it would be "natural to suspect that the most important reason" for the West's "rational restless" "lay in differences in heredity" but this comment was strictly speculative and marginal.[14]

[14] This remark prompted Blaut to conclude that "Weber saw race as one primordial, or presociological, factor explaining the greatness of Europeans" (2000: 21). This is an extremely unfair characterization; worse racial remarks can be found in Marx, and other great thinkers who grew up when our knowledge of, and our personal

Phenomenology of the Western *Spirit*

What about G.W.F Hegel? In what follows I hope to introduce the idea that his *Phenomenology of Spirit* ([1806] 1977) can be read as an invaluable work on the distinctive restlessness of Western culture – so long as we view this book as an account of the developmental experience of the *Western spirit* rather than of the human spirit as such. I will argue that the basic truth contained in Hegel's *Phenomenology* is that the West is the only civilization in which its most cherished ideals about the self, freedom, and reason have progressed over the course of history. The distinctiveness of the Western spirit, from a Hegelian perspective, is that it cannot be comprehended as a substance, a state of being, as in other civilizations, but must be apprehended as an "activity". The rational culture of the West can be known only by knowing it as an experience which developed *in time*. "Time is the Concept itself that *is there*… Spirit necessarily appears in time" (Hegel 1977: par. 801).

The Western spirit appeared in time. Like Weber, Hegel detected an inner necessity (a "dialectical" logic) in the philosophical development of the West. The difference is that Hegel traced this logic to the nature of human reason *per se* to become actually what it was potentially from the beginning. From the first flowerings of philosophy in ancient Greece, Hegel portrayed this rational spirit as if it were in a state of dissatisfaction and alienation, ceaselessly pressing ahead, trying to understand, overcome, and sublimate every non-conceptualized unknown it encountered. He believed that reason started to display this restless disposition – its true nature – when it came to "discover" itself as a faculty in its own right in ancient times. For it was then that reason for the first time apprehended its capacity for self-reflection, to think for-itself, in terms of its own volitional abilities, ceasing to accept passively the existence of norms, gods, and natural things as if they were "things-in-themselves" beyond its conceptualization.[15]

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contact with, other ethnic groups was minimal. Surprising as it may be, of the numerous sociologists and historians who have elaborated "Weberian" theories not a single one has ever addressed the ultimate basis of the West's rational restlessness. They have been preoccupied, rather, with clarifying and updating Weber's intricate arguments (Schluchter 1981; Kalberg 1994), defending or criticizing his essay on the Protestant ethic (Pellicani 1994; Green 1973), or explaining the West's peculiar rationalism in terms of the institutional structures and dynamics of a given period (Collins 1986; Mann 1986; Huff 1993).

[15] I have long been fascinated by Hegel's philosophy. As a PhD student I attended H.S Harris's lectures on the *Phenomenology of Spirit,* which were formally open to

Unlike Weber, Hegel did not restrict the experience of Western reason to the rationalizing activities of formal and theoretical reason; he was less preoccupied with the way reason had subjected social life to quantification, precision, and standardization. What drew Hegel's attention was the seemingly restless desire of Western reason to become fully conscious of itself as *free activity*. It was this desire to be the source of its own assumptions and principles that drove Western reason forward until it brought into existence a culture wherein individuals enjoyed freedom of inquiry, tolerance of diverse views, and meritocratic advancement. According to Hegel, individuals become what they are potentially – rationally self-conscious agents – when they recognized themselves as free in their institutions and laws.

The *Phenomenology* is a work that seeks to capture, in a comprehensive manner, the developmental experience of the idea of freedom in its intrinsic association to the developmental experience of reason. It does so by viewing every single major Western outlook – for example, Roman stoicism, skepticism, Catholic scholasticism, Cartesian rationalism, British empiricism, German idealism, and romanticism – not as isolated or timeless viewpoints but as evolving "moments" in the effort of human reason to become what it is intrinsically: the free author of its own concepts, values, and practices. The *Phenomenology* thus exhibits the ways in which diverse but interrelated outlooks held sway and conviction for some time only to be seen as limited in their inability to provide answers consistent with the demands of beings that are becoming more aware of themselves as the free creators of their own beliefs, laws, and institutions.

The *Phenomenology,* however, should not be viewed as a strictly chronological history of the development of consciousness. One could

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students at the University of Toronto and York University, where, in the case of the latter, I was doing my studies in the interdisciplinary program of Social and Political Thought. At the time (1989), Harris was known as one of the leading authorities on Hegel on the strength of his two volume work, *Hegel's Development: Toward the Sunlight, 1770–1801* (1972), and *Hegel's Development: Night Thoughts, 1801–1806* (1983). A few years later, Harris published another two volume work on the *Phenomenology* under the title *Hegel's Ladder* (1998). These four volumes are filled with details about the intellectual background and personal evolution of Hegel's philosophy. The following paragraphs draw on Harris's shorter study, *Hegel's Phenomenology and System* (1995), as well as on Avineri (1980), Findley (1976), Lauer, (1982), Taylor (1987), Pippin (1989), Solomon (1985), Pinkard (1996; 2000), Wood (1997), Foster (1998), Stern (2002), and Kojeve (1996), not to mention, of course, Hegel's writings, and other sources to be listed later.

argue that there are five major sequences in this book: "Dialectic of the Object," "Dialectic of the Subject," "Dialectic of Reason," "Dialectic of Spirit," and "Dialectic of Religion" – each of which has its own starting point and chronological order and each of which completes a circle of its own. So, while the *Phenomenology* is not a chronological history from the first chapter to the last, it has been argued that within each of these major sequences, there is a dialectical progression from one form of consciousness to another, according to which each successive step should be seen as "higher" in its incorporation of the valuable aspects of earlier outlooks and in its contribution to new insights and solutions to the problems and contradictions that prior perspectives could not handle.

These chronological sequences would seem to suggest that, for Hegel, humans were fated to develop their ways of knowing until the emergence of Hegel's modern outlook. This would be inaccurate. Hegel set himself the "scientific" task of observing the actual cognitive experience of humanity, "the progression of human culture in historical time" (Harris 1995: 20). It was only after reviewing the past from the perspective of what had transpired *after the fact* that Hegel was able to argue, retrospectively, that from the beginning there was within humanity an inner disposition to think and act "for-itself" (reflectively) rather than exist passively "in-itself" (unreflectively) (Solomon 1985: 279–80). The *Phenomenology* concludes with the idea of "absolute knowledge," which stands for Hegel's own effort to recount "all the modes of human cognitive experience" (Harris: 96). As we read the *Phenomenology*, we come to see in these sequences a sketch of the stages of the formation of the human spirit.[16]

The *Phenomenology* is thus an account of the entire dialectic of theses, anti-theses, and syntheses effected throughout history until Hegel's own time. Hegel believed that humanity had reached in his own time (in the post-French revolutionary era of Europe) a point of true and full satisfaction *as far as the conceptualization of the human capacity for free reflection was concerned*. This is why Hegel wrote that Spirit

[16] By "Spirit" Hegel meant the totality of the human cultural experience at a given point in time. When he wrote of the development of "Geist" or "Spirit" he meant the development of human philosophy, politics, arts, and religion (Solomon: 6, 284). I thus disagree with Taylor's view (1987: 89–91) that, for Hegel, the course of history "is spirit positing itself as a matter of rational necessity." Humanity is not the "vehicle" of a God positing itself; rather, history is an expression of the gradual development of humanity's own effort to achieve free reflection.

"appears in time just so long as it has not grasped its pure Concept" (1977: par 801); that is, so long as humans have not achieved a proper self-understanding of themselves as free rational beings, Spirit would continue to evolve in time. Hegel's point was not that there would be no more history after him (no new philosophical outlooks or no further debates about, for example, how widely free speech should be extended). It was that, insofar as the conceptualization of human reason and freedom was concerned – as well as the capacity of the modern liberal democratic state to provide the framework for the expression of one's freedom – the final stage of history had been reached during his time (Pinkard 1995).[17]

I want to argue that Hegel's *historical* philosophy should be read as an account of the intellectual developmental experience of the West rather than of humanity. Hegel wrote in his *Philosophy of History* that

> the first phase of the idea of freedom was to be found in Asia. In the political life of the east we find a realized rational freedom developing itself without advancing subjective freedom…The glory of oriental conception is the one individual as that substantial being to which all belongs, so that no other individual has a separate existence, or mirrors himself in his subjective freedom (1956: 105).

But what he saw thereafter in China and India was mere "duration, stability…unhistorical history."

> [While the states and empires in the East] are constantly changing their position towards each other…are in ceaseless conflict, which brings on

[17] It is beyond the scope of this chapter to engage Hegel's *Phenomenology* in a detailed manner, but if I may cite some passages from Pinkard on when the European mind came to reach this point: "Hegel's claim about the final stage of history is thus neither a metaphysical nor a theological, quasi-eschatological thesis. It is rather the view that insofar as the conceptualization of freedom is concerned, the European modern life has reached a point at which there seems to be nothing in principle left to be developed. A modern constitutional state with representative political institutions, based on a market society with the appropriate mediating institutions and a compassionate familial structure embodies for political communities what the *Phenomenology of Spirit* promised: a non-metaphysical, non-alienated, reconciled form of life…The superiority of modern life consists in the rationality that it brings to spirit – that is, in achieving an internal coherence of a 'social space' such that a form of life is achieved in which there is no cleft between the objective and the subjective point of view, in which a type of systematic alienation that had characterized past forms of life – namely, alienation as a reflection of the irrationality of 'social space' – vanishes, and in which that form of life is able to develop accounts of itself that can show to its members and to others that it is within its own terms fully intelligible and capable of explaining and justifying itself without internal incoherence. It thus counts as a realization of freedom, the 'principle' of the modern world" (1996: 336–37).

> rapid destruction…This history is, for the most part, really unhistorical, for it is only the repetition of the same majestic ruin (106).

The rest of the history of freedom would take place only in the West, starting with the Greeks and Romans, through the Christians and the Reformation, to the Enlightenment and the French Revolution.

What explanation did Hegel offer to account for this Western peculiarity? It is rather difficult to decide because, while Hegel was clearly writing about the historical experience of Western reason, he also believed that reason was a human generic faculty. He wrote that "mankind in-itself is rational," and that the nature of this rational being is to become aware of its own conceptual creations and activities. This is why Hegel was confident with the "possibility of equal rights for all people," and the possibility that the modern Western conception of freedom would be extended to all the cultures of the world (Pinkard 2000: 493).

Yet, Hegel also wrote of European culture as if it alone had been uniquely characterized, as Pinkard notes, by "a fundamental 'negativity' about itself, a kind of permanent self-doubt and self-questioning that constituted its peculiar energy and driving force" (2000: 471). But Pinkard does not tell us why Hegel saw this negativity in Europe alone. He writes that Hegel presented his account of the development of the "Idea" of freedom, in the *Phenomenology*, as if it had been "*rationally necessitated* by the internal deficiencies of earlier articulations of the Idea" (2000: 491).

This way of reading the *Phenomenology* is in tandem with a long line of Hegel scholars who have interpreted this book as a portrayal of the maturation of human consciousness *as such*. There has been much debate on whether each transition to a new form of consciousness was derived by Hegel himself in a deductive way through his own resolutions of certain contradictions he detected within earlier outlooks, or whether he was exhibiting and attending to the ways in which various forms of consciousness criticized and transformed themselves, that is, tracing the actual way in which truth evolved in the course of history (Solomon: 347–362; Pinkard 1996: 5–13). Whichever of these views interpreters have taken, there is an assumption among Hegel scholars (in general) that the movement as a whole was driven forward by an inherent disposition within humanity itself to provide its own criterion of truth. While Hegel scholars are aware that the *Phenomenology* is an account of the historical experience of Western consciousness, and know well enough that this book makes historical allusions to

this culture only, to Western historical texts, philosophers, and personalities, they still interpret this book and his philosophy as if it were an exposition of "*human* experience and cognition" (Harris: viii, his italics).[18]

My view is that we can make sense of the seemingly necessary way in which reason actualizes what it is possibly in itself – a rational spirit capable of self-determination and self-legislation – only if we conceive the *Phenomenology* as an intellectual account of the experience of the Western mind, since only this mind has exhibited an intense desire to subject the world to its own ends. It is mainly the Western self that has been unable to feel "at home" in the world until it got rid "of the semblance of being burdened with something alien" (Hegel cited in Stern 2002: 42). The question is why this has been so? How do we explain the determination by which the Western mind has sought to overcome, for example, the naturally-given reality of things by comprehending the laws of nature and by creating successively new technologies and new strategies of survival and expansion? Why has the Western mind shown less reluctance to accept "the ineffable mystery of the world"? Why have Westerners been less willing to accept a social order based on laws and norms which have not been subjected to free reflection?

I believe that Hegel did pose these questions in particular reference to Europe: why the history of this continent came to be such that it could be seen, retrospectively, as "a gradation – a series of increasingly adequate expressions or manifestations of freedom" (1956: 63). He did so in a section of his *Philosophy of History* entitled "Geographical Basis of History," and in a section of his *Philosophy of Mind* entitled "Anthropology of the Soul."

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[18] None of the aforementioned sources consider how it is that a book that makes references almost entirely to the history of Europe (except for the chapter on "Religion" which makes references to Persian and Egyptian beliefs) can be interpreted as an account of the cognitive experience of humanity. Pinkard knows that Hegel's philosophy is Europe-centric, and yet he writes as if the *Phenomenology* were an account of humanity's aspiration for freedom: "Hegel's own interpretation of that story was that humanity's collective aspiration had been 'freedom,' that since ancient Greece this had been more or less a self-conscious aspiration, and that the line from ancient Greece to 1830 was one of attempts to work out what was entailed by such an aspiration and was most assuredly not the effects of some quasi-natural law at work forcing European humanity to lurch along a preordained path from Greece to modern Europe. What was at work in world history was the "negativity embodied in European life, a constant self-doubt and skepticism even about what mattered most to people drove Europe to become 'philosophical' and progressive" (2000: 633).

Hegel and the Geographical Basis of the "infinite thirst" of the West

His explanation, bluntly expressed, is that the geography of Europe engendered a different human "soul," "character," or "personality". The cultures of China, India, Persia, the Americas, and Europe evolved in dramatically different geographical settings. These different settings deeply affected the character or psyche of its people. Hegel is not a *materialist*-geographical determinist. The role geography plays in his work is fundamentally different from the role it plays in the cultural materialists we examined in chapter one. In Harris, Sanderson, Christian, and Diamond, humans are reactive creatures who adapt to the pressures of the environment as they seek to survive. Humans are conceived in a purely passive way, in terms of what they already are by nature. They see no essential difference between humans and animals; humans are also fundamentally driven by a *common* desire to survive. Divergent outcomes amongst different human communities are attributed to divergent resources and geographical locations. The external environment is thus made into the active agent of historical differentiation and change. In Hegel, by contrast, different environments have different effects on the psychology of humans and the opportunities available for the exercise of their faculties. Some environments encourage some "character" traits more than others. Different environments may thus work to activate, *to a higher or lesser degree,* certain innate dispositions and potentialities of the human species.

Hegel does not look at the environment as a mere supplier of resources or as the one active-external force that "makes history" by pressuring humans to act in certain ways:

> It is not our concern to become acquainted with the land occupied by nations as an *external* locale, but with the natural type of the locality, as intimately connected with the type and character of the people which is the offspring of such a soil (1956: 79–80).

There is, however, an interesting similarity between Diamond and Hegel in the way both call attention to geographical differences *in conscious opposition to racial differences*. Diamond's rejection of explanations which rely on genetic racial differences is well known (1997: 19); Hegel's is not. Here is what he says on the "physical qualities" of the soul in his *Philosophy of Mind*:

> With respect to the diversity of races of mankind it must be remembered first of all that the purely historical question, whether all these races

> sprang from a single pair of human beings or from several, is of no concern whatever to us in philosophy. Importance was attached to this question because it was believed that by assuming descent from several couples, the mental and spiritual superiority of one race over another could be explained, indeed, it was hoped to prove that human beings are by nature so differently endowed with mental or spiritual capacities that some can be dominated like animals. But descent affords no ground for granting or denying freedom to human beings. *Man is implicitly rational; herein lies the possibility of equal justice for all men and the futility of a rigid distinction between races which have rights and those which have none*. The difference between the races of mankind is…a difference which, in the first instance, concerns the *natural soul*. As such, the difference is *connected with the geographical differences* of those parts of the world where human beings are gathered together in masses" (1971: 41).

The peoples of the world belong to the same species, but their state of being – their mental vision, temperament, and character – is deeply influenced by their place of habitation in the earth. The first general observation Hegel makes is that "the locality of world-historical peoples" are confined to the temperate climatic zone; "in the extreme zones man cannot come to free movement; cold and heat are here too powerful to allow Spirit to build up a world for itself" (1956: 80). He notes that the three continents of the Old World have "an essential relation to each other, and constitute a totality" in contrast to the peoples of the other continents which have been comparatively isolated (87). This relation lies around a single sea, the Mediterranean, which is the "true theatre of history"; without this sea "the history of the world could not be conceived: it would be like ancient Rome or Athens without the forum, where all life of the city came together" (87).[19]

The Mediterranean includes the civilizations of Greece and Rome, and also of Carthage and Alexandria and Syria, with their connections to Mecca and Medina. The "eastern" side of Asia "is severed from the process of general historical development, and has no share in it." India, China, and Mesopotamia, with their river plains, were major players at the outset of human history, but due to certain geographical barriers they remained relatively enclosed within themselves, with the sea

[19] Braudel writes similarly: "It is in fact the major feaure of the [Mediterrnean] seas's destiny that it should be locked inside the largest group of landmsses on the globe, the 'gigantic linked coninent' of Europe-Asia-Africa, sort of planet in itself, where goods and people circulated from earliest times. Human beings found theatre for their historical drama in these three conjoined coninents. This was where the crucial exchanges took place" (2001: 24).

having less influence on their culture (101). Meanwhile, Europe, among the Mediterranean regions, opened up the area beyond the Alps to start a new epoch in human history encompassing the Atlantic (88).

For Hegel, the "character" of Europeans was fundamentally molded by the sea. The sea was not merely an economic opportunity, an invitation to piratical plunder and commerce; it was an intense stimulant to the human soul and mind:

> The sea gives us the idea of the indefinite, the unlimited, and infinite; and in *feeling his own infinite* in that Infinite, man is stimulated and emboldened to stretch beyond the limited (90).

The sea cultivated a distinct sense of the known and the unknown, the finite and the infinite, and a curiosity about the limits beyond the known. The experience of a life-style in the sea produced less restrained personalities.[20] But there is more to the geography of the place we call "Europe."

Hegel notes, as well, the greater environmental diversity of Europe and the fact that its mountains, plains, valleys and streams are all "of limited extent" and no one great river or plain dominates the ecology. He contrast this variety to the Eastern states, wherein the "prominence" of "single massive features" – deserts cut off by major rivers – give the landscape a "monotony" lacking in the stimulation of the senses and the mind's eye. In the West, the horizon was "diversified," in the East, the horizon exhibited "one unvarying form" (90, 225).

Westerners who are currently attuned to the need to show respect and mindfulness towards other cultures (and be aware that every culture has dealt with the struggle for survival, which has been, and

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[20] Michel Mollat du Jourdin writes: "Europe's ties to the sea go back to the beginning of time […] Regardless of the way the Earth is represented, either by a map or a globe, or of the mode of cartographic projection or the angle of photographic vision, Europe's silhouette conveys its intimacy with the maritime element: it is small, very small, peninsula surrounded by the seas which assail it. Joined in the east to the expanse of Asia, it ends in the west in delicate articulations and is broken up into archipelagos in both south and the north…For geography, the contrast between Asia and Europe goes beyond continentality. It involuntarily justifies the opinion brought back from the Far East by Paul Claudel: 'The West looks to the sea and the East to the mountains'. The contrast is clear. To go swimming in the sea no Western European travels more than 350 kilometers…The ratio of the length of the coasts to the continental area in Europe and in Asia: 4km per 1000 square km for the former and 1.7 km for the latter…[T]he course of European rivers facilitated links between the shores and the hinterlands. Although they cannot be compared to the Chinese rivers or the Amazon, those of Europe prolong the rhythms of maritime navigation into the heart of the continent…" See *Europe and the Sea* (Blackwell 1993: 3–6).

still is, for some countries, an extremely demanding imperative) may be rightfully taken aback by Hegel's description of Africa in particular. But this is hardly a reason to dismiss his entire line of reasoning.[21] First, it should be noted that Hegel was not making odd observations not heard before; he was under the influence of various predecessors, including Montesquieu's idea that the *esprit de la nation* is affected by climatic factors, and Herder's idea that each nation has a unique culture connected to its native soil and expressed in its language, folk songs, and history.

Barry Cunliffe, a current leading archeologist in Europe, makes similar observations in his book, *Europe Between the Oceans* (2008). He writes that "what made Europe so influential was the restlessness of its people: it was as though they were hard-wired to be mobile" (vii). While he follows Braudel's concept of slow history in his detailed attention to the physical-geographical characteristics of Europe, he emphasizes as well the way the geography of this peninsula developed a character-type with an "innate restless energy" (viii). Neolithic Europeans, he writes, were "driven by a pioneering ethic embedded in the *psyche*" (113, 139). It was this ethic, as Cunliffe specifies, that accounted for "why it was that Europe above all other regions managed to achieve [world] dominance" (vii).

Every detailed point Cunliffe makes about Europe's topography is consistent with Hegel's general observations. Some passages are worth quoting:

> One of the great attributes of the straggling peninsula of Europe, with its deeply convoluted coasts and its island fragments scattered all round, is the sheer length of the interface between land and sea. Estimated to be 37,000 km, it is equivalent to the circumference of the world (31).
>
> In its immense variety the European landscape defies easy definition. In no equivalent area of the earth's surface is it possible to find so many different ecozones so closely packed together: it is a variety rich in

[21] Kuykendall (1993) offers a critical but reasonable assessment of Hegel's view of Africa which avoids the harsher criticisms common today (Hegel was a racist). He points out that "by using Hegel's system, it can be demonstrated that Africa is part of the World Spirit on a higher level than Hegel presumes and possesses in Hegelian terms of morality, religion and political constitution" (573). He correctly challenges Hegel by rejecting Hegel's division of Africa into three parts, Africa below the sub-Sahara, European (or Mediterranean) Africa, and Egypt, which Hegel connects to Asia. Taking Africa as the continental mass that it is, Kuykendall uses Hegel's own system against his now dated observations to argue that Africa did achieve as high a level of civilized reflection.

> opportunity, encouraging human communities to venture and to adapt, and by so doing to develop a flexibility conducive to survival (38).

I could go on about the rivers that "crisscrossed the European peninsula," the individual ecological niches, and the corridors that connected the valleys and the mountain ranges. I will return to Cunliffe later to show that he does not restrict Europe's mobile culture to the "infinite" presence of the sea only, but observes as well that one of the "greatest natural attributes" of Europe was the "Middle European Corridor leading from the Atlantic to the Black Sea," and eastwards through the Pontic steppe across the Volga and the Urals (40). I will argue in the next chapter that this corridor and its link to the steppes, with its pastoral, horse-riding way of life, was a crucial geographical component in the formation of Europe's uniquely restless culture.

Much of what Hegel says, when stripped of its ethnocentric infelicities, comes down to the point that Europeans were the accidental beneficiaries of an environment that stimulated certain psychosomatic traits. One difference with Cunliffe is that Hegel places greater emphasis on the activation of the human mind, whereas Cunliffe writes of the pioneering spirit.[22]

Hegel and the Beginnings of Western Reason

The beginning of Europe's ascendancy has been dated from many points: the Industrial Revolution, the modern world capitalist system, the Renaissance. There is a strong consensus that the rise of Europe should be sought no earlier than the Middle Ages, although some still connect it back to Athens. For Hegel, however, the question was less Europe's ascendancy than its uniqueness, which he attributed to its

[22] Cunliffe's book contains a central paradox. It opens with the claim that "what made Europe so influential was the restlessness of its people," as evidenced by the voyages of discovery, the Renaissance, and the Industrial Revolution. Yet the book follows Braudel's idea that the underlying force of history should be located in the slow moving patterns of the geographical world and the interactions of humans with nature. Thus, as much as Cunliffe highlights the "mobile" character of Europe's geography, he obscures Europe's "restlessness" by framing it within Braudel's idea of slow history. What is all the more intriguing is that Cunliffe, as we will see in the next chapter, pays keen attention to the aristocratic warlike culture of pre-historic, ancient, and medieval Europeans – the very culture he otherwise describes as being filled with energy and individual drive. To his credit, in going back to Europe's prehistory, starting in 9000 BC, and carrying the history to the 1000 AD, his book encourages readers to broaden their temporal perspective regarding the restiveness of the West.

autonomous capacity for free reflection, a capacity which, in his view, had descended from the Greeks, and which therefore required for its explanation a consideration of the origins of Greek uniqueness.

To this day no one knows how to account for the origins of the "Greek miracle". In stark contrast to the numerous explanations which have been offered on all the other major revolutionary transformations of Europe, no strong or consensual argument has yet been produced in response to why ancient Greece "discovered the mind," discovered the method of causal science, invented the literary form of tragedy, prose writing, and tapped into the progressive spirit of critical reason. Many classicists have offered no more than tautological explanations in which the *explanandum* reappears in the *explanans*: "Greek philosophy grew out of an exclusive national culture and is the legitimate offspring of the Greek spirit" (Windelband 1956: 3); "Greek philosophy has a good claim to be regarded as the most original and influential achievement of the Greek genius" (Luce 1992: 9).

One influential but rather question-begging explanation is that Ionia, the birth place of Greek natural philosophy, located in coastal areas of present-day Turkey, was dotted by mercantile city-states that looked favorably upon innovation, criticism and individual expression. The worlds of Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, and Phoenicia, however, were similarly cosmopolitan, urbane, and commercial. Some have added that a community of rational inquiry was made possible by the emergence in Ionia, and in Greece at large, of a unique institution, the *polis*. It has been argued that the *polis*, by being a free political institution in which all male citizens were free to participate in the affairs of their city, promoted a culture characterized by reasoned discourse and debate, adversarial viewpoints, and a disposition for seeking out the truth on rational grounds. This idea is summed-up well by Randall Collins:

> The key feature of this situation was the competition that resulted owing to the presence of many intellectuals selling their wares to the public. Because they were free intellectual entrepreneurs, not taking orders in a priestly or government hierarchy, there was no built-in-bias towards maintaining tradition. Competition with others meant intellectuals had to develop new ideas and improve them against rivals' criticism. During the time when the city-states flourished, there was an unparalleled situation of free intellectual community with many markets to exploit; the result was a period of vigor, which subsequent history has regarded as a Golden Age. The roots of modern philosophy and science are found in this period; here, too, we find the beginnings of social science (1994: 6–7).

But why did Ionia-Greece see the rise of a freely-organized political community in the first place – and not the more advanced civilizations of the Near East, or, for that matter, the Sumerian city states which dominated the Mesopotamian landscape around 2500 BC? Collins simply answers in passing that the "Greeks retained the crude democracy of tribal war coalitions" in their city-states (6). The problem here is that all civilized cultures and cities came originally from tribal backgrounds and tribal "democracies." Was there anything unique to the tribal organization of the Greek city states? I shall argue that there was. But let us continue, for now, with the existing lines of investigation.

McClellan and Dorn have tried an explanation which points to the geographical distinctiveness of Greece. They argue that the mountainous ecology of Greece, which compartmentalized the land into separate valleys, encouraged the rise of small independent city-states. They also contrast Greece's rainfall farming to the great rivers and large flood plains of the East. They observe that the former promoted decentralized economic activities whereas the latter promoted hydraulic agriculture and monarchical administrations (1999: 55–59).[23]

The incompleteness of this explanation is that it presumes that the "competitiveness" evoked by the presence of hundreds of city-states produced, on its own, a republican government of citizen-soldiers. It presumes as well that the mere existence of independent city-states and citizen-soldiers cultivated an ethos of free discourse and "a new sort of science" devoted to the pursuit of "theoretical knowledge". McClellan and Dorn are seemingly aware that something is missing in their explanation, concluding that "it may be impossible to reach an understanding of exactly why a new scientific culture came into being in the unique habitat of Hellas" (57).[24]

What Hegel suggests to me, albeit in a very general way, is that there were already in Greece – before the *polis* – characters unwilling to submit to despotic rule. I will explain below what I mean by these characters. But in anticipation of this historically based argument that I intend to elaborate in the next chapter, let me state for now that the

[23] Harold Dorn presented this argument earlier in *The Geography of Science* (1991).

[24] Similarly, Herbert Muller tells us that "it was precisely in and through the polis that they developed their distinctive individualism," and, on the other hand, that "ultimately we can no more explain the originality of the Ionians than we can explain genius" (1966: 112–115).

polis was created by a pre-existing aristocratic culture whose values were physical prowess, courage, fierce protection of one's family, friends, and property, and above all, one's *personal* honor and reputation. The polis grew out of a peculiar social landscape of tribal *republics* in which *individual* rivalry for prestige and victory had the highest value, and in which hatred of monarchical government was the norm. Before citizenship was expanded to include independent farmers and hoplite soldiers, the Greek mainland was dominated by a warrior aristocracy. This expansive and aggressive aristocracy was the original persona of Western civilization.

What I have highlighted from Hegel is certainly inadequate. Let me restate the point I have tried to make regarding Hegel's *Phenomenology*. I have tried to suggest that Hegel's "inner dialectical necessity" makes more sense if we see it as an account of a peculiarly restless mind. Most of the dialectical steps in this book are brought forth by human beings who have already "discovered the mind" and have started to reason beyond the prereflective customs and habits of their community through a dialectical style of reasoning. We find this form of reflection earliest in the Milesians. The Milesians are the fathers of rational thought, the "first men self-consciously to subordinate assertion to argument and dogma to logic" (Barnes 1982: 5). With the onset of Ionian philosophy, what had been hitherto "*only a possibility*" – the use of reason in a self-conscious way – "*begins* to manifest itself in the conduct of the World's affairs" (Hegel 1956: 57, my italics).

Hegel on the "desire" of World-Historical Individuals

Now, I would also like to suggest that in Hegel there is another major insight which takes us back in time to the earliest manifestations of Western freedom – before the rise of the *polis*, *before the first expression of Western reason in Ionia*. This insight became clear to me after I approached Hegel's historical philosophy for what it says about *Western* culture in particular rather than for what it says about humans in general. Let me start this way: while Hegel wrote of reason as if it was driven by an inner necessity to make the world its own, he accepted Kant's idea that human passion, ambition, and egoism were the handmaids of reason. The actual social advancement of reason was not a matter of the "inner necessity" of reasoning alone, of "thought thinking itself". Humans were not ethereal minds cut off from the elements

of life; they were creatures *of nature* with instincts, desires, and interests. This is how Hegel expressed this point in his widely known "Introduction" to his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*:

> He who is active for a cause is not simply 'interested,' but 'interested in it.'… Nothing therefore happens, nothing is accomplished, unless those concerned with an issue find their own satisfaction in it…Nothing great in the world has been accomplished without passion" (1978: 28–9).

We must be careful, however. There are two different contexts in which Hegel writes of the role of human *desire*: First, in reference to actual historical/political actors, as he does in his *Philosophy of History* and, second, in the context of section "B. Self-Consciousness" in the *Phenomenology* which contains the famous dialectic of the master/slave relationship. When Hegel writes of desires in his philosophy of history he is thinking of both the everyday passions of ordinary humans and the extraordinary passions of great individuals. This argument is squarely in line with Kant's reasoning whereby the march of humans to higher levels of culture results from their "unsocial sociability." Hegel agrees that without qualities of an unsocial kind, out of which the spiritual and physical tortures of world history have arisen, all the potentialities of humans would have remained hidden in their germ. Hegel, however, came up with his own term, "the cunning of reason," to refer to the fact that human beings, in pursuing their private aims, were not always fully conscious of the temporal possibilities of history and of the way their own actions participated in the furtherance of those possibilities.[25]

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[25] By cunning of reason Hegel did not imply, as was generally assumed before the Hegel revival after the 1970s (Lowith 1949: 54), that we humans are the pawns of a God who uses our violent passions for the sake of realizing His goals. Even as Taylor (incorrectly) says that Hegel envisioned "Spirit" as a metaphysical entity that was working its goals through humanity, I agree with him that, in Hegel's view, great men do "instinctively sense the importance of what they are doing, and so do the men around them, who flock to their banner…Thus the greatness of world-historical individuals does not just lie in their being instruments of the World-Spirit. They are also those who first sense and give articulation to what must be the next stage" (1987: 392–93). Avineri detects (1980: 230–34) two "contradictory" definitions of the cunning of reason in Hegel: one in which great men are seen to be conscious of the wider historical meaning of their actions, and one in which they are seen as just pursuing their particular interest without grasping their place and meaning in history. Napoleon and Hegel belonged to a time when statesmen and philosophers in particular were very well read in history. It would not have been difficult for Hegel to attribute to Napoleon enough knowledge of the historical conditions in which he was acting. Napoleon understood that, in putting an end to the anarchy that ensued during the reign of Terror, and in writing

Hegel, however, made an interesting distinction, if implicit, in the way the "cunning of reason" utilizes the ordinary desires of average humans, and the way it utilizes the extraordinary passions of "world-historical individuals" (1978: 36, 40). The cunning of reason we observe on a daily basis, so to speak, consists in the way that reason employs the desires of normal individuals to sustain the ongoing state of affairs. But the cunning of reason that is associated with the passions of "world-historical individuals" such as Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, and Napoleon, is altogether different in the way it brings about new stages in the development of freedom. Only heroic individuals have passions powerful enough to break the bonds of the old order. Mere desires for wealth and security are hardly their driving passions. They want to achieve immortality even at the price of bodily discomfort, happiness, and premature death (1978: 41). Thus, in this sense, Hegel makes a distinction between appetitive desires and status-seeking desires.

Although "world historical individuals" are "practical and political men" with no philosophical grasp of the movement of reason in history, Hegel is quite clear that, "at the same time they are thinkers with insight into what is needed and timely."

> They see the very truth of their age and their world…the new universal, the necessary next stage of their world, to make it their own and put all their energy into it (1978: 40).

Thus, Napoleon was driven by his lust for conquest while simultaneously bringing to the nations he conquered the new ideals of the Enlightenment which France had realized in the Revolution of 1789. Many of the countries he invaded were indeed compelled to liberalize their laws, abolish serfdom, improve and extend education.[26]

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the Napoleonic Code, he was solidifying the institutions of the new bourgeois world, just as he was satisfying his passion for greatness. The rise of a non-noble Corsican to the highest position of power, over and against the noble elites of Europe, represented the actualization of the liberal idea of a career open to merit. Wood is one-sided in thinking that Hegel's great individuals, as practical men of affairs, were unable to comprehend the historical meaning of their deeds (1990: 232) – although, I would agree, that the full implications of their actions would have become clearer (following the logic of Hegel's philosophy) to the great individuals of the modern era, in tandem with the growing historical consciousness of Europeans.

[26] The critics of Napoleon are numerous. For example, a short biography by Paul Johnson portrays him as a forerunner of totalitarianism, compares him to Stalin, and claims that the most important legacies of the Corsican general were the eclipse of France as a the leading power of Europe and the introduction of institutions such as the secret police. I am more persuaded by Steven Englund's take on Napoleon:

The tragedy is that "many an innocent flower [was] crushed to pieces", thousands of soldiers and innocent people, whole cultures and institutions, were ruthlessly destroyed in order to bring about a new stage of freedom.

It was, indeed, world-historical individuals, with their excessive pride and willfulness, who have done the most to push forward new ideals, challenging political orders where ordinary human passions tended to fall asleep, reawakening again and again the commoners to pit themselves against each other in the name of new principles, violating old religions moralities, looking for new lands, and transgressing the boundaries of the unknown. But what do these "world historical individuals" have to do with my claim that Hegel's insights into the nature of human desire take us back in time to the most primitive manifestations of Western freedom before the rise of the polis?

The Master-Slave Dialectic and its Historical Reference

This brings me to the second context in which Hegel uses the word "desire": in Section B, "Self-Consciousness" of the *Phenomenology* (1977), Chapter 4 entitled "The Truth of Self-Certainty," which contains the famous account of "Lordship and Bondage". Today, the most common interpretation of the lordship and bondage section (or the master-slave struggle) is that it is a parable about the nature of "selfhood" in which Hegel sets out to demonstrate that self-consciousness becomes determinate only though communication with another self consciousness. This section is thus seen as the point in Hegel's text where the "social" dimension of human experience makes its appearance. Hegel sets out to show that the self who claims to be certain of his sensory experiences (including the Cartesian self who says "I think, therefore I am", or the Kantian ego who speaks of the "possibility of the

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He "may ultimately be seen as a liberal, in this sense: he sought, via a regime of laws and institutions, to elude profound political conflict. Unlike Hitler or Stalin, Napoleonic nation-talk was not irrationalist against 'them' – but rather from the Roman-universalist perspective: 'us' absorbing (acculturating, modernizing) 'them' " (2004: 466). For Hegel, "a world-historical individual is not so sober as to adjust his ambition to circumstances; nor is he very considerate. He is devoted, come what may, to one purpose. Therefore such men may treat other great and even sacred interests inconsiderately – a conduct which indeed subjects them to moral reprehension" (1978: 43). They are justified only "insofar as their deeds really do serve to bring about the further actualization of spirit's freedom" (Wood: 230).

'I think' accompanying all of my representation") is impossible unless one also recognizes the existence of other selves. It is believed that Hegel uses the parable of the master's rule over the slave to show that the self-sufficiency of the master is an illusion since the master cannot obtain true recognition from a slave lacking independent judgments (Solomon: 425–31). True recognition depends on a relation of mutual equality in which there are neither masters nor slaves (Rockmore 1997: 64–72). Thus, the isolated self (I=I) cannot claim to have knowledge of something unless this self acknowledges the existence of another self as an autonomous subject, "as something that has an independent existence of its own, which, therefore, it cannot utilize for its own purposes" (Hegel as cited in Stern: 74). Knowledge presupposes "two selves mutually recognizing each other as independent" and "collectively coming to take certain types of claims as counting for them as authoritative" (Pinkard 1996: 53–55).

The master-slave dialectic, it is true, is intended to illustrate that one "cannot achieve self certainty except as a member of a community of free persons who mutually recognize one another's rights" (Wood 1990: 93). This dialectic ends with the image of a master who cannot get satisfaction from the recognition he gets from his servant. But this relates to the *eventual outcome*. We should not underestimate the dynamic which precedes the creation of master-slave relationship. The opening paragraphs of Chapter 4, "The Truth of Self-Certainty", which include paragraphs 166 to 176, deal with "Desire in general," and the dialectic of this desire. The subsequent paragraphs, 177 to 196, deal with the master-slave dialectic, and the first paragraphs of this dialectic describe two combatants engaging in a life-and-death struggle for the sake of "pure prestige." Thus, in its very origins, before there is any master and slave, we have a confrontation between two independent individuals, each of whom is driven to fight the other because each desires to wrest superior recognition from another self. The desire of the combatants is *not* for reciprocal appreciation. The concluding outcome is a relation of mutual recognition, but in the beginning we are dealing with two self-assertive individuals for whom the other is an object that needs to be subordinated.

I would argue, furthermore, that this initial struggle can be read as Hegel's version of the "state of nature" parable first presented by Hobbes and Locke. My reading here is indebted to Alexandre Kojeve's much discussed, but not well understood, lectures on Hegel, which he gave in Paris during the years 1933–1939. I will be using these as they have

been assembled by Raymond Queneau and edited by Allan Bloom under the title: *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit* ([1947] 1999). Kojeve does not state explicitly that this fight is a description of the state of nature, but he does write as if it had an empirical or anthropological basis in the past before the formation of states. I will go beyond Kojeve, however, in suggesting that the life and death struggle that brings about the master-slave relation should be read as a description of the *Western* state of nature.

I am well-aware that the current scholarly view (in the Anglo-Saxon world) tends to reject Kojeve's "empirical," "historical" or "anthropological" reading. Quentin Lauer thus maintains, with explicit reference to Kojeve, that Hegel is "doing a phenomenology of consciousness, not a history of social development" (1982: 104). Similarly, Stern writes that the *Phenomenology* should not be seen "in historical terms." He admits that the *Phenomenology* refers regularly "to actual historical episodes," but he thinks that these references are made only as "they relate to particular stages in the *conceptual* development that Hegel is tracing out for consciousness" (2002: 86; his italics). For Solomon, Hegel plainly rejected "any such 'empirical' interpretation of the origins of civil society." The master-slave dialectic, he writes, should be "understood in terms of the conceptual progression" of forms of knowledge, not "the circumstantial emergence of humanity in history" (436). In fact, according to Solomon, Hegel saw "the idea of the 'state of nature' [as] not only a historical fiction…but [as] fraudulent fiction, which does not even make conceptual sense" (449). It does not make sense because humans are inherently social and it is no possible to envision an empirical setting in which isolated individuals actually meet in a fight for prestige. Robert Pippin (1989) also thinks that this dialectic "is not intended as an introduction to a philosophic anthropology;" it is, rather, a purely conceptual effort to show "why" a fight for prestige "results in the opposition of Master and Slave, why this relation represents a kind of impasse for both", and why the resolution of this impasse can only be achieved in a relation of mutuality (153–59).

I believe that this encounter in the *Phenomenology* between two prestige-seeking combatants can function as a historical starting point to the section in Hegel's *Phenomenology* entitled "Self-Consciousness". Hegelian scholars in general have been hesitant to treat the sequence of forms of consciousness in the *Phenomenology* as if it were a chronological history of the actual development of consciousness from ancient to modern times. While they tend to agree, in varying ways, that the

Phenomenology is a reflection on the development of human consciousness in history, they insist that the dialectic does not follow in a chronological way the progression of ideas. In the words of Jean Hyppolite, "the spirit is history for Hegel," but the *Phenomenology* is not "the History of the World" (1974: 31).

Michael Foster, in his diligently researched book, *Hegel's Idea of a Phenomenology of Spirit* (1998), carefully tries to demonstrate that the *Phenomenology* was conceived by Hegel as a chronological history of the development of consciousness. He cites Hegel's words in the Introduction of the *Phenomenology* which state that the sequence of forms of consciousness portrayed in his work "is, in reality, the detailed history of the formative education of consciousness itself to the standpoint of Science;" that is, up to the completion of Hegel's philosophy or "Science" in the modern age (Foster: 300; see par 78 in the *Phenomenology*). Since Hegel's chronology proceeds mostly by historical allusions, Foster sets himself the task of finding a "historical reference" for each shape of consciousness. But this is a complicated discussion which lies beyond the aims I have set for this chapter. I will say that Foster pushes the argument too far. The many interesting historical referents he comes up with are based on conjectural suppositions, since Hegel is, as Hyppolite correctly points out, "generally stingy with historical detail and proceed[s] always by allusions" (34).

It is really in the later chapters of the *Phenomenology*, when he reaches the modern era, that Hegel starts to illustrate the appearance of new forms of consciousness with concrete allusions and references to names and literary works including Bacon, Galileo, Hobbes, Locke, Hume, Lavater's physiognomy, Gall's phrenology, Schiller's *The Robbers*, Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, Diderot's *Rameau's Nephew*, Goethe's *Faust*, Herder, Kant, and his contemporaries. For ancient and medieval times, there are some concrete allusions to Greek and Roman ideas, Hellenistic Greece, Neo-Platonism, Stoicism, Skepticism, and Christianity. However, as Foster recognizes, the first three chapters of the *Phenomenology*, "Sense-Certainty," "Perception," and "Force and Understanding," lack any unambiguous historical references (302). They also seem to be out of step with the chronology of the rest of the book. Generally speaking, every Hegel scholar I have cited thus far believes that these chapters deal mostly with modern epistemological questions. Whatever allusions one may find here, it is to thinkers such as Hume, Locke, Newton, Kepler, and Kant, as well as to Plato and Aristotle. Some have argued that the three chapters on their own have

a chronological order, but no one has tried to show that they are chronologically ordered in such a way that they depict the earliest stages of human consciousness.

Foster tries to persuade us that they do portray human consciousness in the earliest stages of history. He writes:

> Sense-certainty emerges at the dawn of human prehistory, in ancient Persia, Perception in the next phase of human prehistory, in ancient India, and Force and the Understanding in the next phase of human prehistory, having its first beginnings in Pharaonic Egypt, developing further in Homeric Greece, and reaching its culmination in Greek rationalism (311).

Foster offers some perceptive arguments justifying this reading. The early chapters make allusions to modern scientific ideas, but they do so only in the sense that in the cumulative movement of knowledge the later forms of consciousness contain within themselves elements which preceded it and which were anticipated in the earlier forms (354–56). He says that Hegel's model of world history was based on his most important and influential forerunner, Herder, who argued that the torch of world history began in ancient Asia, then passed to ancient Egypt, to ancient Greece and Rome, and then to medieval and modern Europe (351). Hegel, too, began his *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* with the ancient orient, following a similar chronological order until modern Europe.

Anyone who has read the opening chapters of the *Phenomenology* knows that they contain no direct historical allusions. It is very difficult to make any concrete connection between their contents and the contents of human thinking in the ancient Orient and Egypt. I am not persuaded by Foster's references to Persian, Indian, and Egyptian religion. Hegel's lectures on world history were prepared during the 1820s, at which time his knowledge of history had increased substantially from what it was when he completed his *Phenomenology* in 1806. His *Lectures* were also intended as a philosophy of world history, whereas the *Phenomenology* was intended as an account of the historical experience of the development of human consciousness. Moreover, the chronological order of his *Lectures* was not the same as the one Foster attributed to the *Phenomenology*; Hegel began his transactions of world historical peoples with China, thence India, thence Persia, and thence Europe. As for Egypt, Hegel believed, oddly enough, that the history of this civilization was eventually fulfilled in the history of the Persian Empire.

I value Foster's book greatly for the way it reinforces Hegel's grand treatment of the progression of consciousness and freedom in historical time. Even though he tries to argue that the first three chapters portray the development of human consciousness in the East, his argument that the *Phenomenology* should be read as "a chronological history of consciousness from ancient times up to the modern age" (299) is consistent with my view that this book should be appreciated as one of the most profound contributions on the developmental character of the Western spirit.[27] Every historical reference Foster points to in connection to the shapes of consciousness which emerge after the first three chapters are from the European experience (323–352).

Having said this, I must also take issue with the historical reference Foster uses to identify the opening paragraphs of Chapter 4, "The Truth of Self-Certainty", which deal with "Desire in general," or, as he puts it "Life and Desire" (312). These are the paragraphs which deal with human desires in general, for food, security, and survival; as well as with the uniquely human desire for recognition, which leads to a deadly fight for prestige, and which forms the basis for the master-slave dialectic he writes about in the next paragraphs of that chapter. The historical reference Foster uses for Life and Desire is: "ancient Greek culture primarily in fifth-century Athens, especially during the age of Pericles" (315). The reason Forster offers for choosing this period is that it follows chronologically the period he attributed to chapter three, "Force and Understanding," which reached its historical conclusion with the earlier forms of Greek rationalism that predated 5th-century Athens. He also believes that the paragraphs dealing with

[27] For a multicultural reading of the *Phenomenology*, see Russon (2004). Russon takes the idea that "self-consciousness is…won in a dialogue of mutual recognition" to mean that "we must each come to identify ourselves in the culture of the other" (173–83). This goes against the reflective education that Hegel traces immanently through the European experience. Western individuals have been educated to respect the rights of individuals to pursue their own religious beliefs, but this should not be confused with what Russon calls a "politics of ethnic respect" according to which our "self-conscious selfhood requires of us…to find in…another culture's rituals…a mirror of our own identity" (181). This rather insipid statement lacks historical context; the Western identity evolved in Europe and cannot be mirrored in Islamic Iran or Confucian China. The rise of a global/multicultural culture *in the West* is a different matter; and Russon, a Canadian, clearly wants to use Hegel to promote the idea that Canada has no identifiable Western identity, but is a blank sheet upon which others should have a right to imprint their cultural values, creating a mélange of cultures, or a mosaic, or a checkered board of isolated "solitudes." Don't expect China or Japan to do the same; that would be a rather imperialistic expectation; only the West – Russon makes regular references to Derrida – should deconstruct its history.

the master-slave relation, or "Lordship and Bondage," refer historically to the period beginning in the later 5th century when Athens began its decline and slavery started to spread, and then to the Roman period from the Second Punic War to the advent of the emperors when there was "a loss of political freedom in the mass of the citizenry and a growth in the enslavement of noncitizens" (317).

Using the long period covering Greek slavery and Roman slavery as a reference for the paragraphs dealing with the master-slave relation is reasonable enough, even if one may quibble about the existence of slavery amongst European barbarians and before classical Greece. But it makes little sense to use the classical culture of 5th century Athens at its peak as a reference for a dialectic dealing with combatants who are fighting for prestige, even if we agree that classical Greece was still a warrior state engaged in wars for prestige with other city-states and with Persia. Foster has a difficult time making conceptual sense of this fight. He grasps its psychological dimension in pointing out that it involves "an attitude of pure self-assertiveness" as the principal form of this shape of consciousness, an attitude wherein humans treat "other men and things as wholly subject to one's will" (251). The one who becomes the master is the one who has a stronger psychological attitude of pure "being-for-self" or self-assertiveness, whereas the one who submits and becomes a slave is the one who fears death and develops an attitude of pure "being-for-another" or deference. In my view, however, he fails to capture the historical context of this form of consciousness of pure "being-for-self".

He believes that Hegel's choice of late 5th century Athens as a reference for this state of consciousness was inspired by a book published in 1789 by the German classicist J. F. Reitemeier, *The History and Condition of Slavery and Bondage in Greece*. He says that Reitemeier gave an account of the origins of slavery in classical Greece and Rome as occurring:

> among individuals whose will are unrestrained by higher authority, each being its own law, and through conflicts between them which typically take the form of feuds, and lead to the weaker succumbing to the stronger, and yielding to him his property and powers, becoming his Knecht [Slave]" (249).

Similarly, Hegel, in Foster's view, explained the origins of slavery in terms of:

> individuals who have a character of unrestrained willfulness or 'simple being-for-self' and in terms of feuds between pairs of such individuals in

> the course of which the weaker submits to the stronger as his Knecht" (249).

This is not an adequate historical reference. Forster's effort to find references for each form of consciousness in strict chronological order leads him into a completely unacceptable view of Greece and Republican Rome that is inconsistent with everything Hegel said about these two sophisticated civilizations. These were not cultures living in the "state of nature" with individuals roaming around engaged in feuds; they were states ruled by constitutions and citizens. These states engaged in organized warfare; they were not led by marauding characters of unrestrained willfulness. It was barbarian Greece and Rome, including Bronze Age Europe, as we will see in the next chapter, that were dominated by willful characters engaged in tribal feuds and single combats to the death.

Hegel's Account of the State of Nature

I agree with scholars who are careful not to attribute a precise chronological order to the first three chapters of the *Phenomenology*. At the same time I disagree with Solomon's judgment that these chapters are devoid of any historical suggestions. Chapter four is the first chapter that deals, at a very high level of abstraction, with the "beginnings" of history – or I would like to argue. The historical reference of this fight is Hegel's own version of the state of nature. It may be argued that Hegel avoided precise historical allusions in his discussion of this fight for the simple reason that he knew that what scholars knew in his day about the prehistory of Europe was very little or next to nothing. The discovery of the linguistic connections between European languages and Sanskrit drew the following comment from Hegel:

> Peoples may have continued a long life before they reach their destination of becoming a state. They may even have attained considerable culture in certain directions. This prehistory, according to what has been said, lies outside of our plan. Subsequently, these peoples may either have had a real history or never attained the formation of a state. During the last twenty-odd years a great discovery, as if of a new world, has been made in history, that of the Sanskrit language and its connection with the European languages. This has given us an insight into the connection of the Germanic and Indian peoples, a theory which carries as much certainty as such matters allow. Thus, at present we know quite certainly that there existed peoples which scarcely formed a society, let alone a state, but which nevertheless are known to have existed for a long time.

> Of others whose civilized condition interests us greatly the tradition reaches back beyond the history of the origin of their state. Much has happened to them before. This linguistic connection of so widely separated peoples shows as an irrefutable fact the spread of these peoples from Asia as a center and, at the same time, the disparate differentiation of an original kinship. This fact, fortunately, does not arise from the favorite method of combining and embellishing all kinds of circumstances, which has enriched and continues to enrich history with so many fictions presented as facts. Yet, this apparently so extensive range of events lies outside of history; it preceded it (1978: 74–5).

He was careful not to project onto an unknown prehistory a "state of nature" as if it were a factually validated historical condition. This does not mean, however, that Hegel did not write of the state of nature. What Hegel criticized was the liberal contractual argument that there was an "original state of nature" in which man "was in the possession of his natural rights and the unlimited exercise and enjoyment of his freedom" (1978: 54). He rejected the assumption that, if all the products of culture and history were somehow stripped away, one would find humans living in a state of natural freedom, or in a condition in which each was the possessor of individual rights. The concept of right, for Hegel, was not "negative" in the sense that it was free from all "positive" content, from the weight of social norms and history. Man "in his immediate and natural way of existence" – that is, in the state of nature – was not the possessor of natural rights. The freedoms of men were "acquired and won…only through an infinite process of the discipline of knowledge and will power" (54). Humans had to acquire the capacity for self-control to achieve freedom, which was rather difficult in the state of nature (1971: 175). Hegel thus spoke of the state of nature in terms of the "primitive conditions" of human existence, as a time when human relations were "marked by brute passions and acts of violence."

> The state of nature, therefore, is rather the state of injustice, violence, untamed natural impulses, of inhuman deeds and emotions (54).

Hegel wrote elsewhere, in fact, that "*the fight for recognition*…can only occur *in the natural state*, where men exist only as single, separate individuals" (1971: 172, my italics). The struggle for recognition ceases to be a violent engagement when civil society proper is consolidated. In civil society individuals can achieve recognition peacefully, or in a less capricious manner, by obeying the law and doing what is socially acceptable, pursuing a profession or following a trade. The state tries to

achieve prestige by fighting other states but the state no longer condones violent feuding between citizens.

However, Hegel did not envision the state of nature, when humans were living in their most primitive state, as a condition analogous to that of wild animals. As "crude as they are, [the primitive conditions] they are at the same time connected with social institutions which, to use the common expression, restrain freedom" (54). No human has ever lived naturally, even the earliest humans were members of "social arrangements" (1956: 40). In the long passage cited above, he clearly writes that before the formation of the state, in their prehistory, people "may even have attained considerable culture in certain directions". The individuals who confront each other in the fight for recognition should thus be viewed as members of families, bands, clans, or tribes.

Now, to get back to my initial point in this section, the desire for superior prestige, and the struggle that ensues as a result of this desire, leading to the master-slave dialectic, is the second context in which Hegel accentuates the role of desire over reason. The initial "moment" in the appearance of "Self-Consciousness" is desire in general and the desire for recognition in particular. I suggested above that current Hegel scholars do not pay enough attention to this moment in its own right, in that they tend to focus, rather, on its eventual outcome in a relationship of mutual recognition. I would also say that, insofar as Hegel scholars lack a realistic (historically oriented) appreciation of the fight to the death for recognition, they tend to portray this *fight* as if were merely a phrase or an expression used by Hegel for rhetorical effect against the self-sufficient rational ego "standing off from the world." Lauer thus argues that Hegel brings up a subject with appetitive desires for objects in the world to show us thereby that our relationship with objects, as was examined in the first three chapters, is not "of merely abstract cognition," for "there is no such thing as disembodied consciousness" (1982: 94). Lauer also interprets Hegel's introduction of a subject who desires another subject's recognition as if it were a purely epistemological effort on Hegel's part to demonstrate that one cannot obtain recognition except through the mutual "mediation" of another self-conscious character. Similarly, Wood writes that Hegel's intention is to exhibit for us the fact "that the desire for self-sufficiency and self-worth cannot be adequately satisfied as long as it is treated as a purely egoistic desire…as distinct from wants that express my universal [socialized] rationality" (Wood: 91). Pippin, too, thinks that Hegel's aim is to undermine, dialectically, the notion of an isolated ego

who stands in a cognitive relation to an object "considered apart from intersubjective mutual determination" (1989: 158).

Kojeve and the fight to the death for pure prestige

Kojeve offers a far more penetrating account of the role of desire in Hegel's philosophy.[28] He does so by belaboring the point that self-consciousness makes its appearance in the decision "of Man" to fight to the death for the sake of recognition. Kojeve explains that "Man" starts to become "truly" self-conscious only to the extent that he "actively" engages in a fight where he risks his life "for something that does not exist really" – that is, "solely 'for glory' or for the sake of his 'vanity' alone (which by this risk, ceases to be 'vain' and becomes the specifically human value of honor" (1999: 226). I have learned from Kojeve (and I agree that this idea is not as definite in Hegel) that the section on "Self-Consciousness" opens with this fight because it wants to show that "Man" becomes self-conscious of "his humanity only by negating himself as animal," in his willingness to risk his life, and thus negate his biological fear of death, for the sake of being esteemed by another human being (222–25).[29] Kojeve also wants to show that it is in the attitude of "being-for-self" or self-assertiveness (rather than in the attitude of "being-for-another or deference) that man brings about a profound effect on the constitution of the human personality, leading to discovery of a unified self – this is a point I will explore further in chapter eight.

First, it should be clarified that Section "B. Self-Consciousness" of the *Phenomenology* is preceded by Section "A. Consciousness," which

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[28] The intellectuals who attended Kojeve's lectures consisted of a veritable 'who's who' list including Raymond Aron, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Andre Breton, Georges Bataille, and Jacques Lacan. For a succinct overview of Kojeve, see the chapter on him by Mark Lilla (2001). Lilla says that Kojeve "became one of the most influential political philosophers and statesmen in twentieth-century France" (115). Aron "ranked his friend Kojeve among the truly superior minds he ever encountered;" on reading Kojeve's *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, Leo Strauss "ranked it as the most brilliant case for modern thought since Heidegger's *Being and Time*;" Bataille, after each meeting with Kojeve, felt " 'broken, crushed, killed ten times over: suffocated and nailed down' " (122, 131).

[29] Francis Fukuyama's book, *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992) popularized Kojeve's reading of Hegel in North America. This book's "Hegelian" take on the post-Cold War world approached Hegel from Kojeve's perspective only, and even then it barely engaged Kojeve's text. Nevertheless this is a brilliant book in other respects, which I will address in the last chapter.

deals with the experience of a disembodied mind seeking to comprehend the world as it is. Section A. deals with the way consciousness senses, perceives, and conceptualizes the world of objects. At this stage, Hegel is handling the "dialectic of the object," which is a form of consciousness in which one wants to understand the "truth" by understanding the external world of things. In contrast, in "The Truth of Self-Certainty," which is the first subdivision of Section B., Hegel suddenly brings up a living human "of flesh and blood" that craves and desires the objects of the world. He is no longer dealing with a disembodied human who has a purely cognitive-contemplative relationship with the world. He is examining humans as living beings with animal appetites (Kojeve: 34). Now, Hegel believes that it is when consciousness desires an object – "I want that apple" – that it first *feels* its own distinct identity. Hegel further thinks that we first demonstrate our self-consciousness when the "I," in spite of the primordial fear of death, engages in a fight for recognition with another "I". The idea contained in these sections is that desire (initially in its less human form as an appetite for objects, and then in its uniquely human form as an immaterial desire for recognition) is the original basis of human self-consciousness.

Let me elaborate. The "most elementary form of consciousness" is our knowledge of things as they are apprehended through our sensory perceptions. But to reach self-consciousness one cannot start with this contemplative or passive relation in which "being" (the "external" world) is left to be as it is in itself. When we approach being in this reflexive way we are absorbed by it, we "think only about the thing being contemplated." The more we seek to understand the thing, and the more we apply our consciousness to the "nature" of the thing, the less we know ourselves as beings with our own individuated intentions and goals. The knower of the thing will not know the "I" unless something other than passive theoretical contemplation is present as well. The first mode in which this "I" appears is in the experience of *Desire*. Man experiences desire when he is hungry, and it is in this appetite that he moves beyond the mere contemplation of the thing and becomes aware of the "I" that desires. He will realize that his "I" is not a disembodied consciousness that merely relates to objects as if they were objects of cognition, but there is the "I" that is *alive* and that desires things. The thing is a "non-I" in relation to the "I" that desires it. The existence of a human with desires is possible only because a human is not a thing but an animal with *life*. This desire for a thing

turns into an action in which the object of our desire is consummated (Kojeve: 3–4, 37–9).

The "very foundation" of the being of a human is not abstract contemplation, cognition *per se*, but the desire for something. The desire for food is a biological desire, which is satisfied by the action of eating. But if one is to realize one's "I" as a distinctive "I" one must not allow one's "I" to be determined by the non-I which one desires. "Action that is destined to satisfy an animal Desire…never succeeds in realizing a human, self-conscious I." Desire is human, and not merely animal, to the degree that one's desire is "directed toward another desire and an *other* Desire." One acts in a human way when one's desires are not merely for the thing alone, but so as "to make another recognize [one's] right to that thing." In the desire for other humans to recognize one's desires one brings out one's human, non-biological "I". It is at this point that one desires an immaterial, intentional, and therefore uniquely human, object of desire. Now, since there is a "multiplicity of desires," the action that springs out from wanting others to make one's desire their desire will result in a fight in which each desiring subject will want to subsume the desire of others just for the sake of wresting from the others the importance of one's own desires. Only those humans who are willing to risk their biological being for the sake of a non-biological recognition from others are truly humans (5–8, 40–41).

For Kojeve, it is in the risking of one's life that an individual first discovers or reaches a consciousness of his human *self*, because it is through this act that man negates his "objective-or-thingish mode-of-being," showing that he is not bound by "any determinate existence." Kojeve interprets Hegel to be saying that in order to achieve human self-consciousness, a man must be willing to put his life at risk; he must be willing to fight to the death. He must be a willful, assertive character who has the courage to affirm his "being-for-self" rather than to defer to another. This is why "Man" is obligated to start wars, for it is only through action and the risk of life that consciousness of oneself as an independent being that is not merely dominated by the dictates of nature comes to light. In the willingness to fight it becomes clear that "Man" is not a "given-thing," does not exist in a purely passive way, but is a being that creates himself by conscious "Action". One's willingness to assert one's "being-for-self" is the precondition for a life that is freely willed by one's own intentions and goals. It is the precondition for the achievement of recognition by another consciousness and the first instance by which humans achieve individual consciousness.

The willful self must therefore "provoke" the other; force him to start a fight with him (11–13). It is through actual fighting for pure prestige that man first becomes self-conscious of his "freedom" by negating his fear of death and acting according to his chosen ideals in-and-through a struggle with another human.

What we witness in this dialectic is the first "authentic appearance of Freedom" (230). The master is the first historical character to freely create a specifically human world by acting in the name of something as immaterial as "recognition". All other desires are acted upon to satisfy our biological urges, but the desire for recognition is the only desire that is quintessentially immaterial and human. When humans strive for status and prestige they are seeking the desire of another; they are craving for the other person's desire to be directed towards them.[30]

In chapter eight, after I have argued in chapter seven that there was a uniquely Western state of nature which can be illustrated (in detail) by reference to the prehistory of Indo-European aristocratic berserkers, including "barbarian" Europeans, I will elaborate further on Kojeve's interpretation of this dialectic. I will question Kojeve's argument (and by implication Hegel's) to argue, rather, that a battle for prestige does not logically entail as its outcome a social relation in which one *singular* master (upon winning the fight) imposes his authority over a servile man. I will argue that it makes more sense to envision this battle as a contest between two warriors each inhabiting a pre-historic aristocratic culture in which the highest ideal of life was the attainment of recognition through the performance of

[30] The same learned scholars who offer explanations for each moment in the *Phenomenology* seem to lack a basic handle over the meaning and purpose of men risking their lives for the sake of recognition. Richard Norman actually brushes aside the entire section on "desire" and "risk", calling it "extremely unrewarding," "unintelligible" (1977: 47). Pippin wonders "why Hegel feels entitled to make" the claim that a "willingness to risk one's life" is necessary to demonstrate one's "freedom, self-determination, or rationality" (161). Pippin's error lies in presuming that Hegel is merely tracing a conceptual dialectic, which would not require a real fight, rather than an anthropological dialectic with real references and real historical results. This battle is only the first instance in the dialectic of self-consciousness; additional moments are required before the subject becomes fully aware of his self-determination as a rational being. What the master desires and what he actually demonstrates is not his full freedom. This fight is the "catalyst" of the dialectical movement of self-consciousness (Kojeve: 230). The desire for recognition is a socially mediated desire in that it depends on the approbation of others; but it does not depend on "collective mutual approbation" since the master can get acknowledgement from his aristocratic peers.

heroic deeds. It is consistent with the tenor of Hegel's argument to revise his dialectic in such a way that i) the fighting men are each seen as members of an aristocracy in which the main ethos of life was the pursuit of prestige through the performance of great deeds; and ii) the recognition sought by the fighters was from their peers and not from the ones who were *de facto* enslaved.[31] I will argue indeed that the beginnings of self-consciousness presuppose the historical existence of self-assertive characters living in a heroic culture. The unceasing aristocratic desire for personal distinction was, in fact, the basis for the awakening of human self-consciousness and the eventual formation of an integrated personality capable of understanding the opposition between the "natural" and the "mental" world, leading to the dialectic of Western reason and freedom, which Hegel captured in his *Phenomenology of the [Western] Spirit*.

But before I make these arguments I will show in chapter seven that the Indo-European speaking cultures that came to dominate Europe starting in the 4th millennium should be considered as constituting the "beginning" of the West. Bronze Age Europe was a pre-state "social arrangement" dominated by warrior elites who were duty-bound to confirm the essential reality of their status by displaying their prowess in deeds, by leading raids against distant neighbors, acquiring booty, cattle, and women, *and* particularly by fighting in *single* combat. The primordial roots of the West's restlessness lay in the fearless assertiveness of its founding aristocratic fathers. The question will be posed whether there were true aristocratic tribal republics with a heroic ethos outside the West.[32]

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[31] It is quite common for Hegel scholars to ponder whether particular transitions in Hegel's dialectical progressions are sometimes incompletely or even arbitrarily pushed forward along a particular path better suited to the eventual completion of the dialectic in a liberal constitutional order. Wood (93) notes that Hegel's claim that one cannot achieve recognition of one's selfhood "except as a member" of a community of free persons with mutual rights leaves out the possibility that a member of "a privileged race, caste, or class" may very well achieve mutual recognition within that group. My argument will be that masters did achieve recognition from each other, but that it was Greece's aristocratic culture itself which started to push forward in the direction of wider recognition of others, non-aristocrats, through the sublimation of their "barbarian" impulses and the cultivation of less-warlike virtues, leading eventually to the creation, together with the actions of "middling" segments of the population, independent farmers, of a citizen-democratic state.

[32] Hegel scholars have no difficulty finding illustrations in history for every moment in the progression of the dialectic. The same Lauer who says that "it must be insisted" that the idea of two individuals fighting to the death cannot (and must not) be

Spengler and the Faustian Soul of the West

Spengler was also keenly aware of the presence of an unusually dynamic and expansive spirit in Western history. In his momentous work, *The Decline of the West*, originally published in Germany in 1917, Spengler designated this spirit as "Faustian," and argued that its "prime-symbol" was "pure and limitless space." He believed that this Faustian spirit was first visible in medieval Europe, starting with Romanesque art, but particularly in the "spaciousness of Gothic cathedrals," "the heroes of the Grail and Arthurian and Siegfried sagas, ever roaming in the infinite, and the Crusades," including "the Hohenstaufen in Sicily, the Hansa in the Baltic, the Teutonic Knights in the Slavonic East, [and later] the Spaniards in America, [and] the Portuguese in the East Indies." He contrasted this spirit to the Classical soul which, in his view, sought order, balance, and proportion. Here Spengler was following ideas initiated by Johann Winckelmann, and adopted by Goethe, which spoke of "the noble simplicity and calm grandeur of the Greeks," as expressed in classical Greek temples and sculptures: the "Apollonian" image of restraint, measure, and harmony (1973: 183–216).

But, to what original source, cause, or starting place did Spengler trace this Faustian will, this yearning for infinity? It needs to be clarified, first, that Spengler, in his earlier writings, gave no "privileged position to the Classical, or the Western culture as against the cultures of India, Babylon, Egypt," or other non-Western civilizations. He indeed went as far as to say that "the magnificence of the spiritual conception" and "the power of the rise" of Indian, Babylonian, Chinese, Egyptian, Arabian, and Mexican culture "surpassed" by "many times" that of the classical world! These expressions, however, should be viewed in light of Spengler's determination to discredit the idea of progress which dominated the writings of Kant, Condorcet, Hegel,

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associated with any historical content (104), informs us a few pages later that the dialectic of the master-slave, after the master has enslaved the other, can be illustrated, and was illustrated by Hegel, by way of references to the history of the Orient "where one was master and all the rest were slaves," as well as in the history of Greece and Rome "where some were masters and some were slaves" (108). While it is true that Hegel refers to the freedom of only one master in the Orient, and to the freedom of some masters in Greece and Rome, his idea of a master who has slaves makes more sense historically in reference to a culture in which some are aristocratic masters and some are slaves, as was the case in Mycenaean Greece but not in classical Greece and Rome, where some were in fact "citizens" and some slaves.

Comte, and Spencer. He was no admirer of the liberal democratic ideals of the *modern* West, and to that extent he did not think that they should be favored over the values and beliefs of the diverse civilizations of the world. "Progress," to him, was merely a modern Eurocentric illusion which confounded the ideals of a particular epoch – the Enlightenment – with the goals of world history. It was in this context, that he challenged the excessive glorification of classical Greece by generations of German scholars. He sided with certain Romantic German historians against the indifference with which the religious as well as the barbarian attributes of the Middle Ages were treated by progressive Enlightenment thinkers in their conviction that the development of rationality was at the heart of Western culture.

He thus proposed a cyclical view of history, according to which i) each culture contains a unique spirit of its own, and ii) all cultures undergo an organic process of birth, growth, and decay. Each culture experiences "its childhood, youth, manhood, and old age." "Each culture has its own new possibilities of self-expression, which arise, ripen, decay and never return" (Spengler 1973a: 18–24, 106–07). Spengler thus drew a distinction between the earlier vital stages of a culture (*Kultur*) and the later stages when the life forces were on their last legs until all that remained was a superficial *Zivilisation* populated by individuals preoccupied with preserving the memories of past glories while drudging through the unexciting affairs of their everyday lives. Notwithstanding this emphasis on the youthful energies of all cultures, Spengler viewed the West as a strikingly dynamic culture driven by a soul overflowing with expansive energies and "intellectual will to power." He saw in Europe soaring personalities without match in world history. The Faustian persona was to him the source of the West's magnificent cultural traditions. I think John Farrenkopf has it right when he argues that Spengler's appreciation for non-Western cultures as worthy subjects of comparative inquiry came together with an "exaltation" of the superiority of the West (2001:35).

Spengler appropriated, in fact, the German historicist idea that each national culture has a unique spirit which finds concrete expression in its religion, its customs, its art, its science, and its political constitution. But in contrast to Herder, for example, he moved beyond the nation state to argue that each civilization was animated by a profoundly distinctive ethos. An overpowering will to supremacy inspired all Western Europe's cultural creations. Farrenkopf communicates this Spenglerian view as follows:

> the architecture of the Gothic cathedral expresses the Faustian will to conquer the heavens; Western symphonic music conveys the Faustian urge to conjure up a dynamic, transcendent, infinite space of sound; Western perspective painting mirrors the Faustian will to infinite distance; and the Western novel responds to the Faustian imperative to explore the inner depths of the human personality while extending outward with a comprehensive view (46).

In other words, it was not a calmed, disinterested, rationalistic ethos that was at the heart of Western particularity; it was a highly energetic, goal-oriented desire to achieve mastery and exploitation of the natural world. The West was governed by an intense irrational will to transcend the material limits of existence.[33]

What makes Spengler's vision all the more peculiar is that he considered *modern* Western civilization to be extremely energetic and expansionary – when this civilization was well into its maturity (since its birth in the early medieval era). This apparent paradox can be explained if we distinguish between what he called an "organic" and a "mechanical" expression of this Faustian tendency. The "mechanical" pursuit of knowledge and change, symbolized by clocks and spatial extension, and represented by Newtonian physics, was a growing tendency of post-1500 Europe. It was *after* 1800, however, that Europe came to be thoroughly dominated by a purely "mechanical" expression of this Faustian tendency in its remorseless expansion outward through industrial capitalism with its ever-growing markets and technological innovations.

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[33] Farrenkopf thus notes (45) that in contrast to Weber, for whom the West "exhibited an unrivalled aptitude for rationalization," Spengler saw in the West a distinctive primeval-irrational will to power. I also agree with Farrenkopf that "the existence of profoundly different cultural styles demonstrates, according to Spengler, the diversity, not the unity, of human psychological orientation in civilizational development" (45). It is quite revealing that the same multicultural relativists who have repeatedly warned us that the experience of the West should not be used as a model for the patterns of world history have been unwilling to draw the conclusion that the intellectual history of the West – the ideas on human nature of Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, and Heidegger – may express and reflect only the "specific existence" of Western man. The following words from Spengler are quite apt: "When Kant philosophizes, say on ethical ideas, he maintains the validity of his theses for men of all times and places. He does not say this in so many words, for, for himself and his readers, it is something that goes without saying […] It is this that is lacking to the Western thinker, the very thinker in whom we might expect to find it – insight into the historically relative character of his data, which are expressions of one specific existence and one only…" (Spengler, 1973a: 23). There is no "categorical imperative," "no cunning of reason," and no "will to power" outside the West because the experience of non-Western societies is rather dissimilar.

Spengler did not associate this mechanical ("Anglo-Saxon") expansion with cultural creativity *per se*. Before 1800, the energy of Europe's Faustian culture was still expressed in "organic" terms; that is, it was directed toward pushing the frontiers of *inner* knowledge through art, literature, and the development of the nation state. It was during the 1800s that the West, according to him, entered "the early Winter of full civilization" as its culture took on a purely capitalistic and mechanical character, extending itself across the globe, with no more "organic" ties to community or soil. It was at this point that this rootless, rationalistic *Zivilisation* had come to exhaust its creative possibilities, and would have to confront "the cold, hard facts of a late life…Of great paintings or great music there can no longer be, for Western people, any question" (Spengler 1973a: 20–21; 1973b: 46, 44, 40).

Farrenkopf, however, makes the persuasive argument that there are "two Spenglers": an earlier one who lamented the spreading of bourgeois philistinism and the exhaustion of Europe's majestic aristocratic tradition, and a later one who saw in science and technology a continuation (for some time) of the vitality and transformative energy of the West (51). It was not that he saw in the progression of science per se an exemplification of the perseverance of the Faustian spirit. Rather, he saw in industry and technology new forms of Europe's expansionary drive and new prospects for the imperial expansion of his native soil, Germany. But he remained a "pessimist" in anticipating the eventual exhaustion of the West's energies in the rise of internationalism, quasi-pacifism, a downward trend in the birth rate, and the attractions of hedonistic lifestyles coupled with the spread of Western techniques in the non-Western world and the rise of "deadly competition" against the West from Asia (56, 208). The greatest civilization, the last great one, was destined to come to an end.

Although I agree with Spengler that the Greek-Roman "soul" was oriented toward the present rather than the future, I disagree with his "Apollonian" image of the classical world. Farrenkopf thinks, anyhow, that the later Spengler came to view the Greeks and Romans as more individualistic and dynamic. I agree with Burckhardt (1998) that the Classical Greeks were singularly *agonal* and individualistic, and shall argue in chapter eight, following Nietzsche's insights, that all that was civilized and rational among the Greeks would have been impossible without this *agonal* culture. The ancient Greeks who established colonies throughout the Mediterranean, the Macedonians who marched to "the ends of the world," and the Romans who created the greatest

empire in history, were similarly driven, to use Spengler's term, by an "irrepressible urge to distance" as the Germanic peoples who brought Rome down, the Vikings who crossed the Atlantic, the Crusaders who wrecked havoc on the Near East, and the Portuguese who pushed themselves with their gunned ships upon the previously tranquil world of the Indian Ocean.

The key question now is: what was the ultimate original ground of the West's Faustian soul? There are statements in Spengler which make references to "a Nordic world stretching from England to Japan" and a "harder-struggling" people, and a more individualistic and heroic spirit "in the old, genuine parts of the Mahabharata… in Homer, Pindar, and Aeschylus, in the Germanic epic poetry and in Shakespeare, in many songs of the Chinese Shuking, and in circles of the Japanese samurai" (as cited in Farrenkopf: 227). Spengler makes reference to the common location of these peoples in the "Nordic" steppes. He does not make any specific reference to the steppes but he clearly has in mind the "Aryan Indian" peoples who came out of the steppes and conquered India and wrote the Mahabharata. He calls "half Nordic" the Graeco-Roman, Aryan Indian, and Chinese high cultures. In *Man and Technics* (1973), he writes of how the Nordic climate forged a man filled with vitality

> through the hardness of the conditions of life, the cold, the constant adversity, into a tough race, with an intellect sharpened to the most extreme degree, with the cold fervor of an irrepressible passion for struggling, daring, driving forward.

Principally, he mentions the barbarian peoples of northern Europe, whose world he contrasts to "the languid world-feeling of the South" (Farrenkopf: 222). Spengler does not deny the environment, but rather than focusing on economic resources and their "critical" role in the industrialization process, he draws attention to the profound impact environments had in the formation of distinctive psychological orientations amongst the cultures of the world. He thinks that the Faustian form of spirituality came out of the "harder struggling" climes of the North. The Nordic character was less passive, less languorous, more energetic, individualistic, and more preoccupied with status and heroic deeds than the characters of other climes. He was a human biological being to be sure, but one animated with the spirit of a "proud beast of prey," like that of an "eagle, lion, [or] tiger." Much like Hegel's master who engages in a fight to the death for pure prestige, for this "Nordic"

individual "the concerns of life, the deed, became more important than mere physical existence" (Spengler 1960: 19–41).

This deed-oriented man is not satisfied with a Darwinian struggle for existence or a Marxist struggle for economic equality. He wants to climb high, soar upward and reach ever higher levels of existential intensity. He is not interested in the mere prolongation of his biological existence, with mere adaptation, reproduction, and conservation. He wants to storm into the heavens and shape the world. But who exactly is this character? Is he the Hegelian master who fights to the death for the sake of prestige? Spengler paraphrases Nietzsche when he writes that the primordial forces of Western culture reflect the "primary emotions of an energetic human existence, the cruelty, the joy in excitement, danger, the violent act, victory, crime, the thrill of a conqueror and destroyer" (in Farrenkopf: 33). Nietzsche too wrote of the "aristocratic" warrior who longed for the "proud, exalted states of the soul," as experienced intimately through "combat, adventure, the chase, the dance, war games" (1956: 167). Who are these aristocratic warriors?

McNeill and the Indo-European Roots of the West's Warrior Ethos

There are some instances in which McNeill slows down his lively narrative in *The Rise of the West* (1963) to reflect on the unique characteristics of the West (539, 545, 569. 598). On one of these occasions he asserts in definite terms that no other civilization "ever approached" the "restless instability" of the West (539). To what source did he attribute this restiveness? McNeill poses this question only once, and he does so in the context of his effort to understand why Europeans went on to explore and conquer the world after 1500. He thus writes of Europe's "deep-rooted pugnacity and recklessness," adding that the roots of this pugnacity – "the incredible courage, daring, and brutality of Cortez and Pizarro" – lay in the "Bronze Age barbarian" past. What Bronze barbarian past?

> The barbarian inheritance – both from the remote Bronze Age invasions of the second millennium BC and from the more immediate Germanic, Scandinavian, and steppe invasion from the first millennium AD. – made European society more thoroughly warlike than any other civilized society of the globe, excepting the Japanese (539).

McNeill adds that the "chivalric stylization of their [Japanese] warfare" contrasted to the "vastly enlarged scope" of European warlike behavior

(570). When we dig further back into this historical account, we find the following revealing observations. First, that the bronze-wielding barbarians who came into Europe "by about 1700 BC" spoke Indo-European languages. Second, that these Indo-European speakers were a "warrior culture" which came from the steppes and reached the "westernmost confines of Europe," where they established themselves "as an aristocracy" of conquerors over and against the "peaceful megalith-builders of the Atlantic coast" (103). He writes:

> The spread of these warrior cultures brought a great revolution to European life. In place of peaceful villagers and remote hunters and fishers, Europe was now dominated by warlike barbarians, familiar with bronze metallurgy. In this linguistic sense, Europe was Europeanized, since the speech of the warrior peoples eventually supplanted the earlier languages of the Continent. In a profounder sense, too, the warrior ethos of the Bronze Age gave European society a distinctive and enduring bias. Europeans came to be warlike, *valuing individual prowess more highly than any other civilized people*….[T]he style of life befitting warrior-herdsmen of the western steppe have remained a basic part of the European inheritance down to the present day (103–04, my italics).

McNeill notes a few more characteristics about the steppe peoples. Most significantly they domesticated horses about 3000 BC, first using them for food, and later, during the second millennium, harnessing them to light, two-wheel chariots for warfare. He also notes that their pastoral way of life "involved a social tradition combining intense admiration for individual prowess with a political organization under authoritative tribal chieftains" (105). But this is as far as he goes in tracing the unique cultural restlessness of the West. He would not address this topic again. In fact, as we saw in chapter one, his current position is that we should do away with the very idea of a civilization that can be identified as "Western."

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE ARISTOCRATIC EGALITARIANISM OF INDO-EUROPEANS AND THE PRIMORDIAL ORIGINS OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION

> Every elevation of the type "man" has hitherto been the work of an aristocratic society…As to how an aristocratic society…originates, one ought not to yield to any humanitarian illusions: truth is hard…Men of a still natural nature, barbarians in every fearful sense of the word, men of prey still in possession of an unbroken strength of will and lust for power, threw themselves upon weaker, more civilized, more peaceful… or upon old mellow cultures…The noble caste was in the beginning the barbarian caste: their superiority lay not in their physical strength, but primarily in their psychical – they were more complete human beings (which, on every level, also means as much as "more complete beasts"). Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*

> The teaching of Western civilization starts with the Greeks and rarely do people ask themselves what forces lay behind these beginnings. But European civilization was not created in the space of a few centuries; the roots are deeper – by six thousand years. Marija Gimbutas, *The Gods and Goddesses of Old Europe: 7000–3500 BC*

> [Mycenaean] society was not the society of a sacred city, but that of a military aristocracy. It is the heroic society of the Homeric epic, and in Homer's world there is no room for citizen or priest or merchant, but only for the knight and his retainers, for the nobles and the Zeus born kings, 'the sackers of cities.' Christopher Dawson, *The Dynamics of World History*

The Founding Fathers of the West: Democratic Citizens or Aristocratic Warriors?

Among classicists it is almost a truism to say that the West was inaugurated by democratic citizens in the 6th century BC. The aristocratic values "extolled by Homer" are deemed to belong to an archaic past from which the West emerged by moving away from them.[1] With the

[1] For a work of synthesis reflecting this familiar perspective, see Freeman (1999). I am also drawing from the works of classicists who address the point at which

destruction of Mycenaean "divine kinship" around 1200 BC, it is argued, there came into view, after a long "Dark Age" which lasted until the middle of the 700s, a government organized in an open manner by "middling" members of the city, soldiers, lawmakers, statesmen, and priests. It is claimed that the West commenced when political power ceased to be the privilege of a royal palace, when Greece saw a political society characterized by rational argumentation and consensual authority. It was in the democratic polis, we are regularly instructed, that the Western free persona was first visible, when men of moderate wealth came to view each other as equals, when one's merits, fighting abilities, and oral skills, rather than one's noble status or priestly lineage, came to determine one's social standing. This interpretation clearly recognizes that the Greek citizen-body was not dominant in numbers and that wealthy aristocrats continued to play an influential role in the city-state's council, despite the emergence of egalitarian attitudes and institutions. The point is that this interpretation views the democratic (and rational) citizen, not the aristocratic (and hubristic) warrior as Greece's supreme legacy to Western civilization.

Classicists have also told us that associated with this notion of citizenship was a new value, *Sophrosyne*, referring to moderation or self-restraint, in contrast to the older aristocratic virtue of *arête,* which celebrated the martial virtues of bravery and excellence in warfare (North 1966). It is worth recalling here that the root of *arête* is the same as *aristos,* a word constantly used in ancient times to refer to the best warriors. This virtue of moderation, it is argued, was suitable to the life of democratic discussion in the polis, which required self-control and "sound mind." This new virtue challenged the elitist view of the heroic age as a time when the social order was under the spell of mighty and turbulent aristocrats thirsting for glory and plunder without consideration for the pain and hardship they brought onto the world. With this new citizen, it is claimed, Greeks came to see the law as a human rather than as a mysterious-religious creation; they came to see the laws as amenable to criticism and change (Lloyd 1979). The new values of moderation and reasonableness, including the idea that "to be in the middle was best," were thus seen as the uniquely crucial values that inaugurated the West. The French philosopher Nemo (2006: 7–16) expresses succinctly this consensus writing that the first steps in the

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Greece started to become western-like: Forrest (1966), Mandeville (1990), and Donlan (1980).

Western tradition were initiated when Greeks started to condemn traditional aristocratic-Homeric values, "claiming them to be *hubris*, the root cause of disorder, injustice and violence." He adds that, as these values were rejected, "a new entity took to the scene: the citizens [which] knew themselves to be equal to others in law, in reason and in dignity."[2]

It is indeed from the Greek world of the 6th century onwards that we habitually hear scholars speak of the "world's first scientific thought," the "birth of rational man," the "discovery of politics," the "invention of prose," or the "discovery of the mind."[3] Even the classicist and military historian Hanson, who resists a sanitized version of the Greek legacy, and draws attention to the contributions of robust farmers and hoplite fighters, argues all the same that "the core values" of Western culture – rationalism, citizen armies, private property, and separation between religious and political authorities – "originated in ancient Greece during the *polis* period" (1999: xi–xxiv). Hanson dates the polis period to "the era roughly between 700 and 300 BC." He claims that the values of a free citizen were not linked primarily to the rise of mercantile classes and urbane thinkers, but to the "the rise of a novel middling class of autonomous farmers" who owned and worked their farms of about 10 acres at the end of the Dark Ages (1100–800 BC), and went on in the next four centuries to become the dominant cultural force in ancient Greece. These "yeomen" farmers were not the majority in absolute numbers – one-third to one-half of the adult male free residents of the Greek polis saw themselves as independent landowners – but they revolutionized the economic, military, and cultural life of Greece. They cultivated an ethos of family-centered production, free choice in economic activity, freedom from arbitrary taxes and rents, and a mentality which favored constitutional government based on local representation (1999: 25–45, 179–318).

Bruce Thornton also speaks of "a new type of man, never seen before in the autocratic kingdoms of the ancient Near East: the citizen

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[2] This book was first published in French in 2004 under the title *Qu'est-ce que l'Occident?* It was translated in 2006 by Kenneth Casler (Duquesne University Press) with a Foreword by Michael Novak.

[3] The following titles speak for themselves: Meier's, *The Greek Discovery of Politics* (1990); Snell's, *The Discovery of the Mind. The Greek Origins of European Thought* (1960); Wearly's, *The Birth of Rhetoric* (1996); Goldhill's, *The Invention of Prose* (2006). One classic work which refers to the Greeks of the *polis* period as "the first Westerners" is Hamilton's, *The Greek Way* ([1930] 1942).

freeholder of the polis who worked and lived on his own small plot, who held an equal place in the Assembly" (2000: 91). He contrasts this new man engaged in a new type of "hoplite warfare" (face-to-face battle of rank-and-file formations of infantrymen) to the Mycenaean aristocratic warriors who fought from chariots, which, as Thornton wants to remind us, was the same type of warfare practiced throughout Near Eastern civilizations, which were likewise ruled by quasi-divine kings and privileged "aristocracies" (92, 110–14).

But were citizen soldiers the first *Western* individuals? Why do we find in Homer's *Iliad*, before the birth of the *polis*, an aristocratic class made up of identifiable characters living according to an ethic of *personal* glory and achievement? Hanson says that Mycenaean society "was largely analogous to…Asian palace monarchies […] the move from the collective towards the individual" lay in the consolidation of family farms (2000a: 14–16). Yet why does he write, nevertheless, of the "individual heroics" (19) of Homeric-Mycenaean culture? Why does Thornton, too, underscore the brief *biographical* accounts of warriors and their families in the *Iliad*, in contrast to the anonymity we encounter, in his own estimation, in Near Eastern literature, except for the Great King or Ruler who appears as the sole "Master" before whom "even the wealthiest and noblest must grovel in obeisance" (165)?

I want to argue that heroic individuals first come to light in aristocratic societies, and that Mycenae, the society evoked in Homer's *Iliad*, was truly aristocratic. It is in aristocratic societies that we first discover characters zealously preoccupied with their honor and future name, with the judgment of other "masters" regarding their courage, skill in war and in the hunt – as embodied with such intensity in the figure of Homer's Achilles, a character fundamentally at odds with any form of servility. But what do we mean by "aristocratic"? In what sense was Homer's Mycenae uniquely aristocratic? Why do we find the "first" individuals in history in such societies? I will argue that the individualism of the Homeric heroes came originally from the Indo-European chieftains who took over the Greek mainland in the second millennium, and founded Mycenaean culture. The argument of this chapter is that the primordial roots of Western uniqueness must be traced back to the *aristocratic warlike culture* of the Indo-European speakers who spread throughout Europe during the 4th and 3rd millennium. But who were the Indo-Europeans? How were they distinctively aristocratic? Why did they Indo-Europeanize the West but not the East?

Indo-Europeans as the "Other" of World History

Scholars dedicated to the study of Indo-Europeans avoid tracing the prehistoric roots of Western civilization to them due to their initial association with fabled claims of Aryan racial supremacy. As I shall be detailing below, there is no need to worry about these claims anymore. First, the word "Aryan" is a Sanskrit and Avestan word meaning "noble/spiritual one"; it is derived from the term *ārya*, of which the word "Iran" is a cognate. Second, the majority scholarly opinion is that the Indo-Europeans who spread through the continent of Europe did not originate in the Nordic regions of Europe but in the Pontic steppes located in south Russia and the Ukraine. This region is sometimes designated as "a pathway between Asia and Europe." No serious scholar today views Indo-Europeans as members of the so-called "Nordic race." Third, the arrival of the Indo-Europeans cannot be described in terms of a "massive invasion" or wholesale colonization of non-Indo-European cultures and peoples. The arrival was in the shape of a sequence of migrations and conflicts spread over a long period stretching from about 4000–3500 BC to about 1000 BC. Neither was this movement strictly warlike but included a series of processes at once equally significant in their economic and demographic origins and consequences. Moreover, in the course of their migrations and dispersals, the original Proto-Indo-Europeans were differentiated into many ethnic groups, some of which came to have long standing cultural and ethnic interactions with the peoples of the advanced centers of civilization in the Near East.

The Indo-European speakers who migrated westward into Europe also encountered and interacted with Neolithic and early Copper Age peoples, some of whom were "native" inhabitants of this continent while others had originally come from the Near East as migrant farmers before the arrival of the Indo-Europeans.[4] However, there is a crucial difference, barely discussed by specialists, in the nature of the

[4] In fact, the Homo sapiens associated with the "Upper Paleolithic Revolution" in Europe, which started about 40,000–35,000 years ago (BP), came from the Near East where they had already emerged 50,000–60,000 BP. When Homo sapiens migrated to Europe they replaced the Neanderthal populations that had inhabited this part of Eurasia since about 200,000 BP. The spread of farming across Europe from about 7000 to 4000 BCE was both a result of colonization by incoming farmers from the Near East and of assimilation of farming by native populations (Gamble 2001; Whittle 2001).

cultural interactions between the Indo-Europeans who migrated into the Near East and the Indo-Europeans who migrated into "Old Europe." The Indo-European speakers who settled in the Near East encountered more advanced civilizations with dense populations of non-Indo-European peoples. They were never more than "a tiny fraction" of the population in this region, and even when they "took over" and established their own kingdoms, as in the case of the Hittite Empire in the 2nd century BCE, they were eventually assimilated to the majority indigenous cultures. The Near-East was not Indo-Europeanized.[5]

The Mycenaeans who came into Greece, on the other hand, did manage to Indo-Europeanize Greece. While the Mycenaeans were also a minority, they were not just "a tiny fraction" of the population. Moreover, while the "coming of the Greeks" cannot be characterized as a "massive invasion of nomads," it was still a military takeover by fierce warriors who arrived on horse-drawn chariots against a population which had no centralized political organization (certainly not as advanced as those already found in the Near East) and which showed less signs of military prowess. The arrival of Indo-Europeans into the rest of Europe was a more gradual, drawn-out movement, but in the end it was an intrusive movement which resulted in the replacement, though not complete disappearance, of indigenous languages by Celtic, Italic, Germanic, Slavic, Baltic and Balkan languages. There was no population replacement occasioned by the arrival of a minority of Indo-Europeans and, in this sense, the Indo-Europeanization of Europe cannot be seen as a racial displacement.

The real question is how do we explain the incredible superimposition of Indo-European languages on a majority of substrate speakers by a minority of pastoral peoples who had expanded over territories many times greater than their original homelands[6]? I will question the widespread reduction of the term "Indo-European" to a linguistic category. I want to consider what cultural markers amongst the Indo-Europeans allowed them to *superimpose* their language in the first place.

The archaic civilizations of the Near East, the city states of Sumer, the Egyptians of the Old Kingdom, were in varying degrees bellicose.

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[5] I shall address later the influence of the Indo-Iranians on India and Iran, which was for some time considerable but within a world of well-developed non-Indo-European cultures and civilizations.

[6] Almost all Europeans speak Indo-European languages, with the exception of Finns, Estonians, Basques, Maltese and Hungarians.

But the Indo-Europeans were a "new type" of warlike society in the sense that "some men," not just the king, were free to strive for *personal* recognition. They were, moreover, horse-riders in possession of a more dynamic economy which included ox-drawn wheeled wagons, cattle rearing, and ploughs, combined with a healthier diet of meat, bone marrow, and dairy products, all of which gave Indo-Europeans a more robust physical anthropology. These economic conditions, combined with their aristocratic temperament, were decisive in the initial restlessness of Indo-Europeans. There have been many other intense warlike peoples – Aztecs and Iroquois, Zulus and Maori – but they were outside the main theater of world history, and their class structure, religious beliefs, and cultural values were *not* aristocratic. The Huns, the Avars, and the Magyars (all three ethnically-related members of the Finno-Ugric or Uralian-Finnic languages), including the Mongols and the Turks (related to the Altaic language group), were highly mobile horse-mounted nomads who expanded across the steppes from Asia to Europe. These nomads, however, came much later after the Indo-Europeans had already attained a high level of civilization throughout Europe over whom they were unable to superimpose their culture.

It is very difficult today to discuss the legacy of the Indo-Europeans due to the way they were initially linked with the myth of Aryan supremacy. Contemporary experts are so apprehensive about these old claims that they will reject offhand observations such as those by Gordon Childe – the famed Marxist archeologist we discussed briefly in chapter one – that the spread of the Indo-Europeans was rooted in their "exceptional mental endowments" (in Mallory 1989: 266). I do think it is misleading, and plainly unfair to other cultures of the world, to speak of the success of Indo-Europeans – approximately half the earth's population speaks in languages that are Indo-European – as another earlier scholar put it, the "most gifted and the most highly imaginative people of the ancient world" (Breasted 1944: 241).

Thousands of years ago, when the peoples of the steppes were living in tents and riding horses, the kingdoms of Egypt and Mesopotamia, Assyria and Babylon, were a cosmopolitan world of cities, libraries, shops, international trade, roads, taxes, temples and many other traits we identify with "civilization." What I object to is the repressive manner in which some current experts insist, to use the words of I. M. Diakonoff, that the movements of Indo-Europeans "*must not* be seen as victorious expeditions of conquerors" (in Drews 1988: 147). Indeed, we have a remarkable scholarly situation: Indo-Europeans are either

barely mentioned in world history books or (when they are discussed by the experts) are portrayed as a people who were somehow purely linguistic in character.[7] The preferred explanations for the spread of Indo-European languages are those which speak of slow migrations driven by demographic and economic pressures, quiet hybridization and multicultural accommodation. Yet, when it comes to other ethnic peoples of the steppes, such as the Huns, the Mongols, or the Turks, Western scholars show no restraint in celebrating their "extremely mobile cavalry forces," their "exceptionally dynamic, expansionist culture," or the "crushing defeats they imposed on forces which outnumbered them."[8]

Colin Renfrew has gone so far as to argue that the indigenous peoples of Europe (and the Indus valley) were already Indo-European speakers (Renfrew 1987). He claims that Indo-Europeans were originally farmers from Anatolia who migrated gradually into Europe, starting in the 7th millennium, in the course of which they carried their Neolithic subsistence economy into the unfarmed lands of Greece

[7] To mention just a few examples: Clark's *World Prehistory* (1977) does *not* even include the word "Indo-European." Wenke's *Patterns in Prehistory, Humankind's first three million years* (1990) refers to Indo-Europeans only once (421), by way of an endorsement of Colin Renfrew's view (see below) that there were no Indo-European invasions, that the people of the Indus Plain were already Indo-European, and that the spread of Indo-Eurpean peoples was merely a matter of languages and crops. Davies allows them a few pages in his 1300-plus page book, *Europe, A History* (1997), but he also insists that Indo-European "refers essentially to a linguistic category" (220). Armesto's, *The World: A History* (2007), makes a one line reference to Indo-European languages brought to Europe "from Asia" (46), and another to the invaders who "spoke an Indo-European language, destroyed Harappan civilization, and wrote the poems called Rig Veda, "literature of destruction" (106). Nearly every catalogued book on Indo-Europeans is located in the section on linguistics. The remaining few in the history section deal mostly with the Aryan controversy.

[8] Christian, in his sweeping account of natural and human history, *Maps of Time* (2005), recognizes the significant role that "horse-riding pastoralists of the Inner Eurasian steppes" played in facilitating the exchange of ideas, goods, and people, but he restricts his praises to the Mongols and their "spectacular" "campaigns of conquest." In the one instance where he uses the word "Indo-European" he writes that "Indo-European languages expanded, probably from somewhere in modern Russia, to the borders of China, to India, to Mesopotamia, and to Europe, carried by pastoralist migrants" (339–40). Erik Hildinger completely ignores them in his book, *Warriors of the Steppe, A Military History of Central Asia, 500Bc to 1700 BC* (2001) claiming (33) that "the Scythians and the related Sarmatians are the first nomads of whom we have any real knowledge." Armesto, as we saw in chapter one, dedicates a whole chapter to the Mongols, where he argues that the Mongol peace, by allowing Chinese ideas and technology to be carried westward, "opened up European minds to the vastness of the world" (2007: 436).

and the Balkans, and then westwards into the rest of Europe. He observes that other Indo-Europeans pushed eastwards towards the shores of the Black Sea, where they adopted pastoral economies, from which place they then spread into the eastern steppes of Asia. Only the spread of farming, Renfrew insists, can explain the extensive and uniform spread of Indo-European languages in Europe. He rejects the idea that Indo-European speakers were a people with a mobile and expansive culture. In the archeological sense, he writes, "culture is an artificial construct" (Renfrew 1990: 21).

The Indo-Europeans were just plain farmers who colonized most of Europe through small-scale, peaceful occupations of hitherto unfarmed lands over many generations, calmly distributing their languages. Why did they migrate? Renfrew follows a materialist explanation according to which the economic transition from foraging to farming in Anatolia led to an increase in food production, which in turn led to population growth, which eventually created demographic pressures for the colonization of "unfarmed" habitats. The notion that pastoral horsemen had anything to do with the dispersal of Indo-European languages, he concludes, is simply "a modern myth" (1987: 7).[9]

J. P. Mallory offers a far more credible appraisal in his work, *In Search of the Indo-Europeans, Language, Archeology and Myth* (1989), one of the best syntheses to be published on this entire question. I agree with Mallory that Renfrew's argument is "one of the least likely hypotheses" (178). Yet, for all the insights contained in Mallory's book, as we shall see below, he consistently and purposely avoids any interpretation that might conjure up an image of Indo-Europeans as horse-riding warriors storming into Asia and lording over Semites, Hurrians, and the pre-Indo-European inhabitants of Old Europe. He follows the prevailing paradigm that the "most secure legacy of the Indo-Europeans is to be found in the languages spoken by over two billion people in the world." The other legacy he mentions is that of horse domestication,

[9] For the latest effort at condemning the study of Indo-Europeans, see Arvidsson's *Aryan Idols: Indo-European Mythology as Ideology and Science* (2006), where he accepts Renfrew's thesis, ignores most of the recent research, and concentrates on criticizing (yet again) the 19th century advocates of the "Aryan," "Teutonic," and "Anglo-Saxon" heritage of Europe. His conclusion is simple: "the discourse about the Indo-Europeans was dependent on the most powerful movement of the nineteenth century, imperialism" (310). He conveniently leaves out of his bibliography the highly regarded study by the Jewish scholar, Emile Benveniste (1973). I shall refer to Benveniste's work later in this chapter.

and perhaps wheeled vehicles. In the end, "there are few…achievements that we can credit to the Proto-Indo-Europeans" (270–72).

Robert Drews also provides a first-rate analysis of this subject in his much esteemed book, *The Coming of the Greek, Indo-European Conquests in the Aegean and the Near East* (1988). To some degree this book seems quite daring in reviving the old interpretation that the Indo-Europeans came as invaders into the Near East and Greece. In a carefully constructed argument, Drews concludes that Indo-Europeans were largely responsible for the development of chariot warfare, and that it was mastery of this new type of warfare that allowed them to achieve their military victories in the middle centuries of the 2nd millennium BC. For all this, however, Drews perceives the Indo-European peoples as having played no significant historical role apart from their *initiation* of chariot warfare. He informs us that a mere few decades after the charioteers arrived, there were countless chariots clashing throughout the Near East. The distinctive cultural element of the Indo-Europeans is thus restricted to the short-term advantage of being the first to use the chariot.

There is one celebrated scholar (Marija Gimbutas, 1921–1994), however, who has insisted, in no uncertain terms, that the Indo-European peoples were a warlike pastoral culture which superimposed itself on the old native cultures of Europe in successive stages. Gimbutas's basic argument has come to be known as the "Kurgan Hypothesis." She was the first scholar who brought together both linguistic and archeological evidence to argue for a Pontic-Caspian steppe origin for the Indo-Europeans. She identified the Proto-Indo-European homeland with what she referred to as a "Kurgan" tradition of burial mounds in the Pontic steppes (southern Ukraine/Russia). She excavated evidence showing that these burials were generally confined to male warriors, kings, and chieftains, accompanied by their arrows, spears, and knives. She further argued (1990) that the *culture* of Indo-Europeans was patriarchal, predominantly pastoral, and highly mobile, and that its religion was "sky-oriented…with warrior gods of thundering and shining sky…its gods equipped with lethal weapons." The Indo-Europeans "glorified the swiftness of arrow and spear and the sharpness of the blade." "Death in battle was glorified."

The more controversial (and speculative) component of her work, however, lays in her claim that the "belief systems" of Old Europe were "diametrically opposed" to the culture of the Indo-European world. This drastic contrast in "belief systems" indicated that the arrival of the

Indo-Europeans in Europe took the form of a "collision" of civilizations (1982). Gimbutas argued that the civilization of Old Europe was based on a complex religious and artistic system of goddess-worship or chthonic goddess religion, rendered in tens of thousands of figurines (both anthropomorphic and zoomorphic) reflecting the centrality of women in religious and cultural life as "life-giving" and "life-protecting": fertility and birth, death and regeneration. She observed that Old European symbols were "intimately related to the moist earth, to her life-giving waters, to female regenerative organs. This was a matrilineal and "gynandric" culture, as reflected in the burials and indicative of a strong belief in cyclic regeneration: graves were oval, egg-shaped, oven-shaped, and uterus-shaped. She concluded that, whereas Indo-Europeans were violent, patriarchal and "androcratic" societies, Old Europeans were peaceful, egalitarian, and expressive of an earth-based spirituality. For thousands of years Old Europeans were living in harmonious interaction, "of humans in nature, and of men and women with each other," until horse-riding warriors from the Kurgan Culture of the Pontic steppe arrived in three massive waves during 4500–2500 BC and dominated this "Old European kin-group society" with their hierarchical social structure and their "sky-oriented pantheon of warrior gods" (1990).[10]

The ideas of Gimbutas on the culture of Old Europe gained wide acceptance among feminists who were attracted to the notion of a female-centered ancient Europe brought down by aggressive patriarchal males (Conkley and Tringham 1995). But many leading archeologists and anthropologists have pointed to the lack of clear evidence supporting her claim that women played a central role in the social structure and myths of Old Europe. Some called her portrayal of Old Europe "a bit of a dream world," and insisted that, contrary to her claims, the cultures of Old Europe built fortified sites that indicated the presence of warfare and weapons, human sacrifice, and social hierarchy and inequality (Leslie 1989).[11] And yet despite these apparent short-comings, Gimbutas's "Kurgan Invasion" hypothesis has fared rather well in the scholarly world; for example, Mallory writes

[10] See also her excellent refutation of Renfrew's thesis in "Review of Archaeology and Language" (Gimbutas 1997).

[11] It should be noted, however, that Gimbutas does not argue that Old European cultures were "matriarchal"; she says they were "matristic," "non-hierarchical," and "balanced".

(1989: 185) that it "has been accepted by many archeologists and linguists, in part or in total."

David Anthony's *The Horse, The Wheel, and Language: How Bronze-Age Riders from the Steppes Shaped the Modern World* (2007), which should stand as the best one volume work on the spread of Indo-European languages, can be viewed as an updated version of Gimbutas's hypothesis. He does not frame his argument in feminist terms and is careful to avoid any notion of an invasion by Kurgan riders, but he does insist that the "revolutionary" innovations carried out by mobile Indo-Europeans (horseback riding, the heavy wagon, and spoke-wheeled chariots) were responsible for the creation of "a single interacting system" across Eurasia. This system of cross-cultural contacts between the steppes and the civilizations of the Near East shaped the dynamics of world history. However, Anthony's emphasis on this "interacting system" leads him to neglect the distinctive contributions of the Indo-Europeans to the making of Western identity. He recognizes their military ethos and uses the term "military aristocracy" in reference to Indo-European elites, but he does not single them out as a warlike and aristocratic people, and he certainly does not view them as the founders of the West. Still, Anthony's book is indispensably the best up-to-date empirical synthesis on the archaeology of this entire question.

I will use the claims and evidence contained in the leading books and articles to produce a view of the Indo-Europeans as a people whose impact on the prehistory of Europe was extremely significant. I disagree with Gimbutas's idyllic portrayal of Old Europe, but I believe that the scholarly consensus does point to a view of the Indo-Europeans as a *more* individualistic, aggressive, and mobile culture than the Old-Europeans. In what follows, I will attempt to expand on this view by summarizing and interpreting the claims of the leading scholars in this area.

The Distinctive Indo-Europeanization of the West

No issue has aroused more controversy than the question regarding the original geographical location of Proto-Indo-Europeans. It was none other than Childe (1892–1957), author of the widely read books, *What Happened in History* (1942), and *Man Makes Himself* (1936), who first placed the Indo-European homeland in southern

Russia, particularly the steppes that run from above the Black Sea to the Lower Volga and the Caspian. He thus challenged, in *The Aryans, A Study of Indo-European Origins (*1926), the popular northern hypothesis that placed the homeland in Scandinavia, along the Baltic, or the North Sea. Some decades later, Gimbutas gave further confirmation to Childe's hypothesis by identifying the original homeland with the widespread Kurgan culture of barrow-burials in the steppe lands of the Ukraine. Mallory has agreed (182) with Gimbutas's location, though he prefers to use the term "Pontic-Caspian Steppe." He rejects Gamkrelidze's argument (1990), which is similar to Renfrew's, that the homeland existed around eastern Anatolia, the southern Caucasus, north-western Iran, and Armenia. He states, rather matter-of-factly, that this view is "wholly without archeological support."[12]

It is extremely important to understand that the Pontic-Caspian steppe located north of the Caucasus is but one part of a vast expanse of steppes extending from China to Europe. This stretch of grassland, which extends for 7000 kilometers and averages 500 miles in depth. may be described as the main land-highway of world history, serving

[12] Renfrew (1987: 4) makes the revealing observation that, after the Nazis' use of the Aryan theme, "Childe subsequently avoided all mention of this book *The Aryans*, although in fact it offered no evidence in favor of the delusion of racial superiority and was very careful to distinguish between language and culture and supposed racial classifications." This may explain why Childe's *What Happened in History* and *Man Makes Himself* are readily available and cited but not *The Aryans*, which is the more scholarly work. I agree with Renfrew, but I am afraid that, in our politically correct campuses, a particular set of sentences in his book can well be used against him. On the one hand, he seems cautious enough, writing that "the lasting gift bequeathed by Aryans to the conquered peoples was neither a higher material culture nor a superior physique, but…a more excellent language and the mentality it generated". But, on the other, he seems too risky: "The physical qualities of that [Aryan] stock did enable them by the bare fact of superior strength to conquer even more advanced peoples and so to impose their language on areas from which their bodily type has almost completely vanished" (211–12). Though he rejected the idea that Indo-Europeans were in possession of "a peculiar genius," he praised their languages as "exceptionally delicate and flexible instruments of thought" (4, 211–12). Neil Faulkner, in a recent appraisal of Childe as a Marxist archeologist, informs us that when the Nazis started disseminating the fantasy of Aryan superiority, Childe "effectively disowned his own book" (2007). Anthony does not list his book in his otherwise exhaustive bibliography, despite agreeing that the research is now strong enough that "we can reasonably go forward on the assumption that this [the Pontic-Caspian steppes] was the homeland" (82), an argument first articulated in *The Aryans*. Finding a copy of this book at university libraries is not easy; I found the 1926 original print here in the backwoods of the Province of New Brunswick, Canada. I later learned that it was reprinted only once in 1987 by Dorset Press.

as a corridor for bands of horsemen-pastoralists throughout time: Cimmerians, Scythians, Sarmatians, Alans, Huns, Magyars, Turks, and Mongols. Within this long stretch of open steppe, the Indo-Europeans were located between the Volga crossing and the Carpathian narrows, which some view as the principal overland passageway connecting Asia and Europe.[13] This area, with its focal point at the waterway of the Dnieper, where the steppe corridor connects to the Black Sea trade-route, was fiercely contested by all who came because it presented itself as the point of transition between the settled lands to the West and the open steppes to the East. Geographers have distinguished between a high and a low steppe, respectively east and west of the Pamirs, with the "gradient" thus running westward in the direction in which the grazing and the climate improves. This geography tended to encourage migration towards the Middle East and Europe.

Another crucial environmental feature of Europe's unique relationship to the world's highway is that the Pontic steppe actually forms part of what is known as the "great European plain" which stretches without interruption for over 2,400 miles from the Urals to the Atlantic; and since the Ural mountains are no real barriers, this plain is therefore connected to the entire extension of the steppe that stretches to China.[14] Overall the peoples who settled on the plains were not well protected by natural limits; they had to learn to be aggressive, stay aggressive, or be threatened by the constant movement and migration of nomadic tribes (Davies: 47–54).

The earliest evidence for the domestication of the horse comes from the Pontic-Caspian region, or from south Ukraine, after 4800 BC (Anthony: 199–200). While there is abundant evidence that horses were spread across this region during the 4th-3rd millennium there is hardly any evidence of horses in the Near East during this same period. The horse came "from the outside" into Anatolia and was diffused through the Caucasus into Southwest Asia from the Pontic-Caspian region (Mallory: 41, 217). Possession of domesticated horses had reached Iran by 3000 BC (Saggs: 213). The horse was "at home" in the open steppes from central Asia to the Carpathian Basin in central

[13] According to the standard atlases of the world, National Geographic, Rand McNally, Oxford, and Time, the *continent* of Europe extends from the Atlantic to the Urals.

[14] Cunliffe (2008: 40) calls this plain the "Middle European Corridor," and writes that "an enterprising traveler could have made the journey along it [from the Baltic to the Atlantic] comfortably in six months."

Europe. In this open environment, the horse, with its keen eyesight, its herd instinct, and its speed and endurance, was able to protect itself from predators. Although the initial domesticated horses were small, pony-like animals (130–140 centimeters) there is some evidence that points to the use of bits (cheekpieces to exert a firmer control over the horse for successful riding) from as early as 3700 BC, suggesting that the horse may have been used as a pack animal, for light traction, and for riding. While it is true, as we shall see shortly, that the effective use of horses for military purposes was made possible later around 2000 BC, together with the invention of wheel chariots, Anthony mentions the possibility of horse-riding on the north Kazakh steppe between 3500-3000 BC based on evidence of bit wear in Botai culture sites. Pita Kelekna, in his recent book, *The Horse in Human History* (2009), agrees with Anthony that some Botai horses "were bitted and likely ridden for hundreds of hours" (38).

Drews (1988: 30, 77) questions Gimbutas's claim that wheeled vehicles originated in the Eurasian steppe around 4500 BC. He follows Stuart Piggott's estimation that the wheeled vehicle was not invented until late in the 4th millennium, and that its diffusion throughout Europe occurred at the end of the 4th or the beginning of the 3rd millennium. Mallory says that there is evidence of wheeled vehicles in Mesopotamia by 3000 BC, and that there is "abundant" evidence in the Pontic-Caspian region for carts and wagons from at least 3000 BC onwards (218). Thus, he concludes that the Indo-Europeans were "at least one of the candidates for the inventors of wheeled vehicles" (270). Benjamin Fortson states that the "earliest wheeled vehicles" found among Proto-Indo-European speakers are from 3300–3200 BC (2004: 38). Anthony notes that words for wheeled wagons and carts were already part of the Proto-Indo-European vocabulary by 3500 BC, and that after 3400 "real evidence" begins to indicate that vehicles were being used from the Russian steppes through southern Poland into central Europe. More importantly, Anthony emphasizes the way this technology, in combination with horseback riding, allowed for a fuller utilization of the mobile nature of the pastoral way of life. These two new ways of transportation permitted Proto-Indo-European speakers to become the most mobile peoples of the world; the wagon, according to Anthony, was essentially a "mobile home" permitting herders to migrate with their herds for weeks and months. Horseback riding, for its part, was a highly effective means of moving large herds, scouting for pastures, trading, and raiding (63–73, 302, 325–35, 456–60).

The economy reflected in the Proto-Indo-European vocabulary includes Neolithic farming but not as a primary component; in the Volga-Ural steppe, and also in the western steppe, there are reasons to exclude agriculture as the main component, as contrasted to the importance of stockbreeding (Mallory: 217). One already encounters, in the Proto-Indo-European vocabulary, words associated not only with the original Neolithic Revolution but with what Andrew Sherratt has termed the "Secondary Products Revolution" (Sherratt 1981). According to Sherrat, this revolution occurred during 3500–3000 and refers to the efficient exploitation of the "secondary products" of domestic animals, dairy products (butter, milk, and cheese), textiles (wool), as well as the harnessing of animals to wheeled vehicles, the use of yokes and ploughs, and the domestication and riding of horses. Sherratt believes that this "secondary revolution" resulted from diffusions from the Near East. For their part, M. Zvelebil and K. Zvelebil (1990) see a strong link between the dispersal of Indo-Europeans during 4800–2500 BC and the arrival and consolidation of the "Secondary Products Revolution." Anthony accepts the idea (74) that there was a "Secondary Products Revolution," but rejects Sherratt's thesis that it originated in the Near East. He argues that dairying, horse domestication, and horse riding first appeared in the steppes, and that wool sheep and wagons were diffused conjointly across the Near East and Europe between 3500–3000 BC.

By 7000 BC one finds pioneer farmers from the Near East settling into Crete and Cyprus, and by about 6500/6000 one finds widespread Neolithic settlements in the Greek mainland and in the southern Balkans (Cunliffe 2008: 94-97). The development of these farming communities further north into Europe, accompanied by increasing population densities, growing size of villages, and the advancement of craft specialization and copper metallurgy, continues uninterrupted until about 4000 BC. However, between 4500 BC and 4000 BC, there are signs of persistent contacts with the peoples of the Pontic-Caspian region, and in the next millennia there are clear indications of "sizable" intrusions of Indo-Europeans (Mallory: 234). While there isn't enough evidence for "a substantial invasion," the interrelation between the settled farming peoples and the mobile pastoralists was not "entirely symmetrical," since there was a tendency toward larger, fortified settlements in the region. By about 3500 BC, there is evidence of a new cultural horizon, dominated by Indo-European artifacts such as a new ceramic characterized by shell-tempered wares (replacing the

traditional indigenous painted wares) as well as the round burial mounds that are originally associated with the steppes, containing a considerable string of daggers, along with axes, awls, and rings made from silver, which is a metal attributed specifically to Proto-Indo-Europeans.

By putting more emphasis on hybridization, Mallory softens Gimbutas's vision of a purely warlike pastoral people imposing its culture and causing the "collapse" of what she believes was a more sophisticated Neolithic-Copper Age culture of formerly settled farmers of Balkan origin. Nevertheless, Mallory is clear that "what was sporadically attested prior to 3000 BC swelled during the third millennium to provide unequivocal evidence for a movement of population from the Pontic-Steppe into the Balkans" (239). Kurgan burials now show up in Romania, Bulgaria, and former Yugoslavia and provide us with substantial evidence for the introduction of the domestic horse, larger woolly sheep, and possibly wheeled vehicles. Although Mallory does not frame these claims in terms of an Indo-European expansion, Drews has noted that, by the end of the third millennium, the people of the Tripolye Culture, forming the eastern fringe of the Balkan-Danube farming cultures (long in close contact with the world of the nomadic steppe herders) had turned from hoe agriculture to stock-raising. He has also observed that, in the period between 2000 and 1700 BC, about one-fifth of the animal bones found in Tripolye Culture sites are horse bones, "a fairly high figure for a region outside the open steppe" (Drews: 80).

Some contemporary scholars enjoy making sarcastic remarks against the old notion of a "massive violent spread of Indo-European storm-troopers." What really happened was far more significant in its consequences: not a single invasion but a continuous, long-term intrusion by a highly mobile and warlike people.[15] The Indo-Europeanization of the Balkans was thus a persistent process of arrivals of new migrants from the Pontic-Caspian region in such a way that the Balkans would then work as a "staging area" for further intrusions into

[15] To be sure, already in the 1930s some scholars were viewing the arrival of the Indo-Europeans as a drawn out sequence of small-scale movements. For example, Emile Benveniste had this to say at a lecture he delivered in 1938: "In their diversity these [Indo-European] invasions have traits in common. They never involved vast movements of warriors. They are rather hardy little groups, strongly organized, founding their order on the ruin of established structures" (in Watkins 1995: 67).

Anatolia, Greece, and north-western Europe. It was on occasion a straight military takeover but also a gradual intrusive movement led not by plain farmers but by riders on horses supported by a flexible (and healthier) pastoral economy. The fact that this economy was more nutritious explains why the "physical anthropology of the deceased [in the new Kurgan-style burial mounds] speaks of a population that was more robust-appearing with males averaging up to 10 centimeters taller than the native Eneolithic [Balkan] population" (Mallory: 240).

Anthony's recent research findings (225–59) reinforce the general view I have adopted here regarding the intrusive nature of the arrival of Indo-European speakers into the Balkans starting about 4200 BC. He starts with the Sredni Stog culture which began in the Pontic-Steppes around 4400 and which lasted until about 3400. He notes that this culture is the "earliest" one to have been linked with Kurgan burials or single mound graves, which emphasized the achievements of individuals. Kelekna thinks that the Sredni Stog was the first society to exploit horses on a "regular basis" (2009: 32). An Indo-European culture which emerged from this one was the Suvorovo-Novo culture of about 4200-3900, which was the first one to migrate from the Dnieper steppes into the northern edges of the Danube Delta. According to Anthony, the movements of these peoples were not only into Europe but also eastwards. He thus detects, from about 3800 BC onwards, a migration into the north Caucasus, which he associates with "ostentatious chiefs" displaying gold-covered clothing and great quantities of bronze weapons in their burials. This movement has come to be identified archeologically as the Maikop culture, dated to about 3700-3500 BC. It is believed that this culture existed as a conduit between the steppes and the urban cultures of the Near East, with wagons entering into the steppes through it, and horses moving out into the south from it.

Anthony also observes that a section of the Volga-Ural steppe population migrated eastwards to the Altai region about 3800 BC, combined with, and leading to, a sequence of movements all the way to the frontiers of China. More specifically, he highlights the Yamnaya horizon as the "first" Indo-European culture to spread across the entire Pontic-Caspian region between 3400-3200 BC, and as the one culture which settled into the lower Danube region by way of "a massive and sustained" migration. He claims that this culture, which settled in the Balkans, could very well have generated both the pre-Italic and pre-Celtic languages. He also says that this culture bordered with the Corded Ware, which had spread across northern Europe from the Ukraine to Belgium,

after 3000 BC. The material culture of the Corded Ware was "mostly native to northern Europe" but they too exhibited the mobile, horse-riding, kurgan and warlike traits of the Yamnaya. He thinks that the Corded Ware may have been the culture out of which the Germanic, Baltic, and Slavic languages originated. The Corded Ware came to occupy an extremely wide territory across much of central-northern Europe. Some specialists have questioned whether this culture was linked to pastoralists from the Pontic-Caspian region given that the Corded Ware burials have been found to contain battle axes not found in other Pontic-Caspian burials. This misses the fact of cultural evolution, fusion of cultural traditions, and local adaptation to different ecological settings.

It should be noted here that the Proto-Indo-European lexicon was rich with words for domesticated animals in addition to the horse: cow, ox, bull, sheep, ram, lamb, goat, dog, as well as words for ducks and pigs. There are also words for coagulated or sour milk, butter, and curds (Fortson: 37). Diakonoff believes (1990: 57) that the Indo-European economy, as it was located in the Balkans and the Danube basin (which he thinks was the original homeland of the Indo-Europeans) "must have been an economy based on high grade agriculture and animal breeding, which supplied milk and meat food for the population in *relative plenty*." By contrast, he reminds us that "the mass of Sumerians and Akkadians had no meat or milk in their daily diet." Anthony writes that pastoralism at large "produced plenty of food – the average nomad probably ate better than the average agricultural peasant in medieval China or Europe" (460).

Andrew Sherratt (2001a: 192) writes that the Corded Ware "battle axes…express the ideal of a society whose self-image was not work but warfare" Although he does not frame his views in terms of Indo-Europeans (once we accept the ideology that the Indo-European question is purely linguistic, there is no need to mention them unless we are dealing with linguistics), he calls the spread of Corded Ware culture and its battle axes through northern and Western Europe, "one of the largest and most revolutionary transformations of European prehistory" (193). To this he adds that the "often rapid and catastrophic" changes which occurred "after 3000BC" with the spread of the Corded Ware culture of plough farming, pastoralism, and battle axes "were accompanied by evident signs of tension between the old and new patterns, as archaic structures based on a static pattern of stone mortuary shrines were rapidly replaced by more mobile ways of life" (171).

Though I will return to this question again later, I shall now briefly clarify that the communities of Old Europe were already "ranked" societies in which, as I mentioned in chapter one, the successful self-interested strategies pursued by aggrandizing individuals brought about differentials in household wealth. The Yamnaya horizon and the Corded Ware, on the other hand, were chief-like societies with a higher degree of differentiation between commoner and elite populations. It is worth contrasting the mobility of the Indo-Europeans with what Sherratt sees as the "constrained" and "small-scale of activity" of the farming communities of Old Europe, whose "efforts were often narrowly focused on fixed points within the world which they had created" (200). The extension of the Corded Ware complex brought "wider networks of social interaction" and greater opportunities to "independent segments of society" for the exchange of goods and livestock. Indeed, older Proto-Indo-European languages typically drew a distinction between movable and immovable wealth; in several languages "moveable wealth" became specifically the word for livestock (Fortson: 19). Mallory thinks that the success of Indo-European languages over the numerically superior languages of Old Europeans was possibly due to the greater vitality and potential for growth of the pastoral economy. He envisions a scenario in which the native population became bilingual, speaking the Indo-European language in the market place or at ceremonial centers in order to obtain better access to goods, status, ritual, and security. The paths to social and material success, and the transmission of this success to future generations, lay in the pastoral way of life and the technology and nutrients associated with the "secondary products revolution" (259). Similarly, Anthony emphasizes the institution of patron/client relations promoted by aristocratic Indo-European speakers promoted within their expanding territories. Chieftains were strong believers in the sanctity of verbal contracts bound by oaths. These contracts permitted Indo-European speakers to incorporate outsiders (who came to assimilate Indo-European dialects) as clients who enjoyed rights of protection in exchange for their services. Anthony also emphasizes the creation of mutual obligations of "hospitality" between "guests" and "hosts" as another way of incorporating outsiders into the Indo-European speaking and pastoral network (303, 341–42).

Diakonoff disagrees with the notion that there was a "collision" or a "clash" between the Indo-Europeans and the peoples of the Near East and Old Europe. He prefers the quieter, less shocking term "language

contacts" (1990: 53). There is no doubt that Gimbutas's vision of the Indo-Europeanization of Old Europe in terms of three massive waves of invasions by violent and patriarchal peoples is faulty insofar as it ignores demographic and economic processes of gradual infiltration and displacement.[16] The successful spread of Indo-European languages cannot be disassociated from the "secondary products revolution" and the mobility of a pastoral life. But it would be just as simplistic (and naïve) to presume that horse-riding warriors were akin to modern-day language teachers.

The spread of Indo-Europeans further westwards is associated with the "Bell-Beaker" handless drinking cups between 2800–1800 BC, which is said to stand "for a whole new way of life" in the areas where this culture appeared, from Scotland to Sicily (Sherratt: 2001b: 250). This Bell-Beaker phenomenon was really an innovative continuation

[16] Much as Gimbutas speaks of the "masculine world…of the Indo-Europeans…[that] was superimposed" upon the Old Europeans, and of the "earliest European civilization [that] was savagely destroyed by the patriarchal element," she is very clear that the "Old European mythical imagery and religious practices lingered in the substratum which nourished further European cultural developments" (2007: 238). Elsewhere she writes, "what is understood today as 'Western civilization' is derived from the merging of the two" (1997: 340). It is also unclear to me how Gimbuta's outlook can be fitted into current academic feminism insofar as she portrays the Old European world of goddesses as a "society dominated by the mother," by fertility, and by the new born child – not as a matriarchal order, but as a culture "in which all resources of human nature, feminine and masculine, were utilized to the full as a creative force" (2007: 236–38). It is unclear because the "masculine" element and the mothering-child rearing element are not particularly endearing elements among some academic feminists. I also question the argument that women would have likely played a minimal, very laborious, and undignified role in a highly warlike society where manly virtues predominated. The following observation by Tacitus, which may be deemed anecdotal, is still telling: "These [women and children] are the witnesses whom each man reverences most highly, whose praise he most desires. It is to their mothers and wives that they go to have their wounds treated, and the women are not afraid to count and compare the gashes." "It stands on record that armies already wavering and on the point of collapse have been rallied by the women, pleading heroically with their men, thrusting forward their bared bosoms, and making then realize the imminent prospect of enslavement…" "[T]hey believe that there resides in women an element of holiness and a gift of prophesy; and so they do not scorn to ask their advice, or lightly disregard their replies." "The woman must not think that she is excluded from aspirations to manly virtues or exempt from the hazards of warfare" (1987: 107, 108, 116). Here is another, if somewhat over-stated and Roman-centric, passage from Ammianus Marcellinus: "A whole group of foreigners would not be able to withstand a single Gaul if he called his wife to his assistance who is usually very strong and with blue eyes; especially when, swelling her neck, gnashing her teeth, and brandishing her sallow arms of enormous size, she begins to strike blows mingled with kicks, as if they were so many missiles sent from the string of a catapult" (cited in Chadwick 1974: 50). More will follow on this topic in a footnote below.

into other parts of Europe of the Corded Ware transformation which had began in Europe after 3000 BC and which had brought about a "breakdown of traditional" native ways of life and the "emergence of more mobile ways of life." There are strong similarities between early Bell-Beakers and the Corded Ware culture. The following words from Sherratt are worth citing at length:

> Like the Corded Ware vessels, these pots [Bell-Beakers] were also typically placed in single male burials, often accompanied by weaponry and covered by a circular mound. They thus represent a diaspora of continental north-west European practices among largely alien populations, carrying the aggressive, individualizing ideology of this area to new parts of Europe. Whereas Corded Ware beakers were usually buried with stone battleaxes, Bell-Beakers are generally found with other weapons: daggers, and archery equipment such as triangular barbed-flint arrowheads and wrist guards of fine stone…This martial image was perhaps completed by leather jerkins and later by woven fabrics, held by a belt with an ornamental stone bone ring to secure it…Early Bell-Beakers display the cords and thongs that distinguished their Corded Ware predecessors; perhaps the later zone ornament, too, is significant, for the Greek word zone means a belt, and the elite of Greek warriors are still evzones, 'the well-belted ones', while black belts still symbolize prowess in the martial arts. The imagery of third-millennium Europe was replete with such symbols, and Bell-Beaker graves expressed the warrior values appropriate to a more mobile and opportunistic way of life (2001b: 252).

The Corded Ware culture, which had been expanding during the earlier 3rd millennium in central and northern Europe, makes a "relatively sudden appearance" on the western edge of Europe in the new but familiar form of Bell-Beakers later during the 3rd and 2nd millennium. This expansion – typified in the spread of a culture of drinking, feasting, and horses – is equally disruptive of the native archaic societies as were the prior expansions by Indo-Europeans. Sherratt also observes a "profound change in attitudes" suggested by more colorful woolen clothing replacing the older garments of skin and linen, new finery and jewelry, new dress fashions, weapons with decorative elements, extra "ostentation on the part of *particular individuals*" (2001b: 254–56, my italics). Meanwhile, later forms of Corded Ware continued to spread on the North European Plain and Scandinavia, while the Bell-Beakers continued to spread during the 2nd millennium, sometimes through gradual diffusion and adaptation and sometimes through "prolonged struggle" with older cultures – into Ireland, Brittany, the Alpine region, Languedoc, Spain, Portugal, Corsica, Sicily and Sardinia.

Chariots, Mycenaeans, and Aristocratic Berserkers

Scholars have been inclined to underestimate the legacy of Indo-European speakers. Mallory says that, as far as "concrete legacies" go, "the best claim is that of horse domestication" (270). He thinks that the horse-drawn chariot cannot be regarded exclusively as an Indo-European invention, for it was possibly invented independently in the Near East at about the same time. By the 17th century, in any case, chariot warfare was widespread from northern Anatolia through to the Nubian lands below Egypt. Mallory minimizes even the significance of horse domestication when he observes that horses were visible in the Near East from early in the 2nd millennium BC (41).

Drews, for his part, does not think that the domestication of the horse and horse-riding were the most distinctive features of Proto-Indo-European society. While he notes that "by the end of the third millennium the riding of horses was apparently a common phenomenon on the open steppes," in contrast to the fact that horses were "rare…in the Near East…in the third millennia," he nevertheless insists that the distinctive legacy of Proto- Indo-European speakers was "the development of chariot warfare" (76, 149). He mentions that the chariot was most likely pioneered and perfected in Armenia (or eastern Anatolia) soon after 2000 BC, adding that this region was "far more likely" the Indo-European homeland rather than the Pontic steppes. It was "mastery of chariot warfare" that led to successful takeovers in the Near East by IE speakers in the middle of the second millennium (153).

It is unclear why Drews needs to insist that Armenia was the homeland simply because this may have been the location where chariots for warfare were first created. Drews's one-sided preoccupation with linking the coming of the Mycenaeans into Greece (in the 1600s BC) with charioteering peoples leads him to dismiss as "historically insignificant" the pastoral movements of Indo-European speakers before the 2nd millennium. He rejects the claim that horse-riding was a peculiar ethnic marker on the grounds that, by the end of the 3rd millennium, the domesticated horse was quite common from central Europe to central Asia (132, 198). He does not consider the possibility that the horse might have been common in central Europe (they were in fact not common in the Near East until after 1800 BC) due to the diffusion of Proto-Indo-European speakers into this region. Be that as it may, non-Indo-European speakers, as Drew tells us, were soon using chariots as the Hyksos did when they established themselves

over northern Egypt in the seventeenth century, and the Kassite-speakers who took over much of southern Mesopotamia soon after 1600 BC (153–54). The cultural importance Drews attributes to the chariot thus turns out to be a mere short-term Indo-European advantage.

I am persuaded that horse-riding was a key element in the spread of Indo-Europeans, well before the invention of the chariot. One lauded criticism against Gimbutas's hypothesis that the spread of Indo-European speakers was occasioned by waves of warlike horsemen was Renfrew's archeological observation that horses were not mounted for military purposes before 1500 BC. This is true; horses were first used directly in battle (beyond mere raiding) only when they were attached to wheeled chariots. Horses were mounted and made effective for *cavalry* warfare only during the course of the 1st millennium after a series of successive inventions: the saddle, the horseshoe, and the stirrup.

Nevertheless, the attempt to make light of Gimbutas's image of Indo-Europeans as horse-riding warriors who stormed into Europe no longer squares well with the evidence. While it is true that mounted combat in terms of a fast, controlled, and sustained gallop was made possible later during the 1st millennium, we should not underestimate the significance of horse domestication and horse-riding. The horse, which Kelekna calls the "aristocrat" of animals domesticated by man, is a highly intelligent, fast, and spirited being. The significance of horse riding was that it "greatly increased the effectiveness and the scale of herding," which led to the accumulation of larger herds, which necessitated larger pastures, which in turn intensified tribal alliances and conflicts (Anthony 222). It has been estimated that horse-riding would have allowed for the use of territories up to five times larger than otherwise.[17]

Anthony, in a co-authored paper (2006), also put together a set of highly persuasive arguments showing that horses could indeed be used for raiding with minimal riding equipment. This paper challenged Drews's contention that horse-riding was most likely "incidental" until the 3rd millennium, and that it was not until the 2nd millennium that horses were used efficiently for military riding (Drews 2004). In this article the authors carefully distinguished "mounted raiding," which they believed was successfully performed shortly after riding began

[17] See the encyclopedia entry "Horse" in J. P. Mallory and D.Q. Adams (1997: 277).

when bits were introduced, and "cavalry," which was introduced during the Iron Age. Anthony and Brown disagreed with the claim that, before the onset of cavalry warfare, horses were used much as donkey-like pack animals, observing instead that the domesticated horses of the Pontic steppes (4200–3700 BC) were "big enough to ride into battle." They were about the same size as the horses ridden into battle by the legendary Roman cavalrymen and the fierce American Indians. "History and experiment both show that horses the same size as Eneolithic steppe horses can be ridden effectively at a gallop, even in warfare, with a rope bit" (Anthony and Brown 2007).[18]

Riding and scouting on horseback would have enhanced considerably the exploitation of the steppes and increased the efficiency of surprised attacks and retreats in raiding. Cunliffe notes that horse-riding probably increased the overall speed of movement by about ten times. Gimbutas estimates that a horse could carry a rider 20–30 miles in one day; that is, about 4–5 times the distance travelled on foot (1997: 356; see also Cunliffe 2008: 158). Gat draws a threefold distinction among i) non- Indo-European pastoralists/herders who did not domesticate horses, ii) early Indo-European "proto-horse pastoralists" who rode horses, and thereby enhanced their "strategic mobility," and iii) Celtic-Germanic-Roman peoples who mounted horses for warfare (2006: 189–230).

In light of these facts, including the points presented earlier on the pastoral way of life of the Indo-European migrants, one can safely assume that, starting in the 5th millennium, and through the 4th millennium, the Indo-Europeans initiated a most dynamic way of life driven by the invention of wheeled vehicles, the secondary products revolution, horseback riding, large-scale herding, and aggressive raiding. Moreover, the Indo-European peoples may have held a longer term advantage in the use of chariots than Drews has estimated. Anthony believes that the "earliest" chariots probably emerged in the steppes before 2000 BC, and that they were employed in the Near East about 1800 BC, that is, about 200 plus years after they had been invented in the steppes, rather than immediately as Drew argues. Anthony draws a clear distinction between i) "true" chariots with two spoked wheels pulled by horses controlled with bits, guided by a "standing warrior,"

[18] See also Kelekna (41–44), who says that 70 percent of Botai horses were standing at 13–14 hands, "larger than the average horse ridden by the Roman cavalry" (38).

and ii) heavy solid wheeled battle-carts or battle-wagons pulled by asses or onagers controlled with lip- or nose-rings, guided by a seated driver. The heavy battle-wagons were a Near Eastern invention, but not the chariots, which most likely arrived into the Near East from the steppes through Central Asia (402–03).

There is no denying, however, that Drews puts together a superb case envisioning the arrival of the Mycenaeans as a conquest by a class of chariot-warriors ("big men, taller and broader" than the typical native inhabitants) rather than a migration of impoverished pastoralists who had been evicted from their original homeland and were seeking new lands "in which to make an honest living" (158, 181).[19] Drew thinks that the Mycenaeans came to control an indigenous population that was "perhaps ten times as large as their own" but which was less civilized than the far larger majorities the Indo-Europeans encountered in the Near East. While the Mycenaean minority "did not ethnically transform the land," it superimposed its language and culture, and thus it "Indo-Europeanized Greece" (195–99). The consensus is that the Mycenaeans were a highly warlike people. Lord William Taylor writes "of the dominant accent placed upon war by the Mycenaeans. It would almost seem as if they loved strife for its own sake" (1999: 135). M.I. Finley tells us that when they came into Greece around 1600 BC "something happened on the Greek mainland which gave a radically new turn to developments there…Mycenae suddenly became a centre of wealth and power, and of a warrior civilization, without an equal in this region" (Finley 1970: 47).[20]

Louise Schofield also observes that before 1600 BC "the mainland of Greece was a cultural backwater […] The men were about 5 ft 2 in-5 ft 6 in tall." But after 1600 the archeological records suddenly portray a "military aristocracy" made up of men who "had an average height of 5 ft 7 in…were robustly built, strong and muscular, with large hands and feet." The archeological remains of this Mycenaean culture "give

[19] One should not presume that chariots were effectively used directly in warfare across the mountainous Greek landscape.

[20] Some time ago, Christopher Dawson observed that "the Mycenaean Culture was, to an even greater extent than the Hittite Empire, or the New Kingdom in Egypt, that of a thoroughly warlike society." He believed this was a society of a "military aristocracy" (2002: 157–58). He also noted, before Gimbutas, that pastoral societies were more patriarchal and "masculine" than farming societies. See his essay "The Warrior Peoples and the Decline of the Archaic Civilization" in *Dynamics of World History* (137–155).

the impression of a fierce and warlike people who gloried in battle and in the hunt" (2007: 28–35, 118). Most scholars agree that the Mycenaeans came by conquest, creating communities consisting of heavily fortified palaces. Their palaces were centers of food collection, storage and distribution, ruled by kings who relied on "a class of aristocrats," or "table companions" (Chadwick 2005: 72). Archeologists are always impressed by their well-prepared shaft graves, which buried the top men together with their swords, daggers, spearheads, arrowheads, and blades, and which show that the aristocracy enjoyed remarkable wealth, and that they venerated military prowess. These types of shaft graves were without precedent at Mycenae or anywhere else in Greece. They are seen as in line with the Kurgan graves original to the Pontic-Steppes (Wardle 2001).

Indo-Europeanists generally tend to argue that Proto-Indo-European speakers were compelled to migrate by "external factors," ecological or demographic pressures. Diakonoff, for example, thinks that Proto-Indo-European peoples migrated in response to "overpopulation" pressures in their original homeland (which in his view consisted of "isolated, poorly connected mountainous valleys" located in the Armenian plateau and Transcaucasia). This scarcity *pushed* them out in search of new lands. Drews, for his part, highlights the *technology* associated with chariots as the "essential" factor behind the Indo-European conquests. In one sentence he adds that "the takeovers were *motivated*… by the desire for power and wealth" (198). But this is a point that, for him, "need hardly be said" since all imperial takeovers are *ipso facto* about power and riches.

Anthony is more careful in the way he addresses the "causes of migration" by distinguishing "push" from "pull" factors. "Push" factors are generally those that compel a people to leave their homes (demographic pressures, war, disease, crop failure, or high bride-prices). Anthony agrees that most current explanations of migrations tend to stress "push" factors. He thinks that "pushes alone" are not enough and that "pull" factors also play a role, by which he means essentially the pulling attractions of the destination (110–111). But all in all, Anthony follows a common line of thinking according to which Indo-European migrations were practical solutions to questions of survival and economic ambition.

I think we miss much if we forget the constant competition for prestige and fame among the noble elites. The young men who were pushed or pulled to migrate were finely built characters eager

for adventure, joy, and standing. I would thus make a distinction between the biological/economic desire for security and gain, obtained by means of rational calculation, and the spiritual-irrational desire for prestige irrespective of privation and biological safety. This is not to say that one should lose sight of the exceptionally mobile life of Indo-European pastoralists. Their migrations were driven literally by horses and wheeled vehicles; but they were also driven by an ethos wherein fighting and voluntarily risking one's life was the essential ground of being worthy of respect and honor as a man of noble birth.

Let me start addressing this restless ethos by noting that the major themes of Indo-European poetry revolved around the heroic deeds, immortality, and fame of individual men. Poets were highly respected; they were not only the repositories and transmitters of knowledge but were also entrusted with singing the praises of heroes. The preoccupation with going into battle to seek personal recognition found expression in such poetic phrases as "imperishable fame" and "to overcome death." Fortson writes that a warrior valued battle above all else because it afforded the opportunity to attain fame, which brought immortality, and in this sense fame was a way of overcoming death (29–30). According to Watkins, the poet had a patron who bestowed largesse on him in return for conferring "on the patron what he and his culture valued more highly than life itself: precisely what is expressed by the 'imperishable fame' formula" (70).[21]

In a culture where individual renown was so important, bestowing a name upon a newborn, especially among the ruling or warrior classes, was the subject of a ritual. Fortson refers to several Indo-European traditions in which the words for "name" and "fame" are collocated such as "famous in name" and "name-fame." He notes that a large number of ancient names ("many of which furnish information about naming practices in Proto-Indo-European times") were in the form of "a bipartite compound X-Y where one or both compound members

[21] See also Chapter 15, "An Indo-European theme and formula: Imperishable fame," of Watkins, *How to Kill a Dragon: Aspects of Indo-European Poetics*. Aaron Gurevich, as I will elaborate in chapter 8, finds "a latent conception of the human personality" through the representation of the hero in the Germanic-Scandinavian-Icelandic Sagas of the medieval era (1995: 19–88). I agree; however, in these heroic poems individuals are still prototypical representations of the ideals of their own class, rather than individuals with their own sense of what virtue is (as in classical Greece) and with their own individual rights (as in modern times).

are concepts, virtues, or animals" such as "having greater fame/glory," "born of god, born of Zeus," "brave among the people," "having a hero's strength" (Fortson: 35).

Combined with this heroic poetry was a highly individuated mode of reckless but "glorious" fighting. Michael Speidel, in a captivating paper (2002), argues that "an outstanding feature of Indo-European culture" was a style of "berserk-like" fighting in which individual warriors would throw off armor or garments in sight of the enemy, "showing off their utter fearlessness," rushing ahead yelling and "raging uncontrollably in a trance of fury." "Flashing eyes, frenzy, and swirling-storm tactics are customs natural to berserk-like warriors everywhere" (253–290). Speidel observes that berserks fought in this manner "for over more than two and a half thousand years, from 1300 B.C to A.D. 1300." While he documents instances of such fighting by the Assyrian army, in the 13th century BC, he thinks that these "mad-warriors" were either IE mercenaries or Assyrians who had adapted this style of warfare from their Hittite neighbors. "By 1500 BC," he writes, "Indo-European speakers held sway from Northern India to Western Europe" (256, 272).

Speidel cites numerous primary sources including Roman writers, mythological stories, and sagas showing that this style of fighting – "naked, shouting, barefoot, flowing-haired, and often in single combat" – was "for love of fame and out of daring."[22] The less protected the body and the greater the capacity to sustain pain and maintain one's "willfulness" unbroken, the more heroic and human the fighter was in the eyes of his peers. The single and singular warrior in combat was idolized. Having the opportunity to fight in this way, the "freedom…to outdo other warriors" was the "highest happiness." A life that lacked deeds was the "greatest grief" (Speidel: 266–69, 284). The "manhood" of warriors depended on deeds of berserk daring. This psychological state of fighting – the wild, beast-like howling and "stormy unruliness" – carried to an extreme the individuality and singularity of the warrior. The etymology of "gone berserk" stresses the "trance-like

[22] I would gather that Hegel came up with the notion of a "first battle to the death for pure prestige" from reading many of the sources Speidel cites from the Greeks and Romans who observed the berserk-style of warfare; these include Xenophon, Livy, Tacitus, Polybius, Strabo, and Caesar. J. N. Findlay writes that "of all great modern philosophers Hegel is the most thoroughly soaked and steeped in things Greek" (1958: 28).

state madness" of fighters, their animalized transfiguration into wild creatures, a bear or a wolf, separated from social controls of any kind, in an utter state of fury (*furor, menos, or wut*).[23]

For Speidel "the mind of the berserker in the second millennium BC was much the same… as that of medieval warriors two thousand years later."[24] The history of IE berserk warriors "offers rich religious, cultural, and military detail from about 1300 BC to AD 1300 and links the bronze, iron, and middle ages, three thousand years of history seldom understood as belonging together" (272, 278). When the Franks were converted to Christianity, they continued to fight in the berserker style; some Frankish warriors even gave Christ the qualities of the Germanic war god "Woden" (from which we take the day "Wednesday) which meant "fury." Some centuries later, in Nordic sagas, Christ was imagined as the Lord's bravest fighter, "God's berserk"! While Christianity "forbade" berserks, their "spirit lived on" late into medieval times among Indo-European speakers in Norway, Scotland, Ireland and other tribal cultures in the northern forests of Europe.

Speidel is correct that the development of Greek and Roman city cultures, and the creation of disciplined armies manned by well protected soldiers who fought in unison, brought an end to the berserker style of fighting of early Romans and Greeks. Classical Greeks and Romans thought of themselves as civilized and of Celts and Germans as barbarians. They contrasted their self-restraint and reasonableness (as well as their courage in staying in rank in the face of the enemy without giving way to fear and panic) with the "recklessness" and "mindless bragging" of berserkers. I would add, however, that Greek hoplites, Macedonian phalanxes, and Roman legionaries did not eradicate the state of mind of the berserker as much as sublimate its excessive, disorganized, and "barbaric" impulses into a far more effective, disciplined style of warfare that would make Westerners "the most deadly soldiers in the history of civilization" (Hanson 2001: 5).[25]

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[23] See also the encyclopedia entry "Warriors" in J. P. Mallory and D. Q. Adams (631–35).

[24] See Davidson (1988) for the "rites of battle" of Scandinavian and Celtic pagans; the "taking of heads" as trophy, battle frenzy, men who turned into beasts, "stormy wandering life…without food or sleep," "lonely champion fighting in single combat and leading his men" (69–92).

[25] In tracing the origins of the West to the polis period, Hanson misses the cultural continuities between the berserker warrior and the hoplite fighter.

Aristocratic and Martial Traits

The berserker style of fighting was one of many traits which testified to the aristocratic-individualistic nature of Indo-Europeans. While experts commonly tell us that Indo-European society – including the Celts and Germanics peoples of the Iron Age – were ruled by an "aristocratic elite" that was "highly warlike," no serious efforts have been made to study the combined significance of these traits. The result is that Indo-Europeans are viewed as "aristocratic" in a light headed way, much like countless other privileged classes across the world. The common line of reasoning is that, notwithstanding variations specific to time and locality, all stratified societies are dominated politically and economically by "aristocratic" elites who live off the surplus produced by the majority.[26]

Likewise, scholars take it for granted that similar elites dedicated to warfare existed in other cultures. At no point do Mallory, Drews, or Anthony stop to reflect (from a comparative perspective) whether Indo-European speakers were aristocratic and warlike in a unique way. Gimbutas did view them as militaristic males who "superimposed" their culture on the peaceful female-oriented cultures of Old Europe. But her emphasis was on their "patriarchal" character. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that Azar Gat admits that pastoral peoples exhibited a *higher* disposition for warfare than non-pastoral cultures. But he downplays this difference in degree, insofar as it does not fit well with his Darwinian claim that warfare was a common feature of the human calculus for survival, reproduction, and dominance across history (189–230).[27]

In the realm of culture and history, where all differences are relative rather than absolute, differences of quantity, scale, or intensity may be substantially important. John Keegan, in his general study, *A History of Warfare*, is quite definitive in his assessment that the pastoral

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[26] This is evident in Bruce Trigger's masterful study of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, Shang China, the Aztecs, the Classic Maya, and the Inca (2003: 147–54).

[27] Mallory correctly questions Gimbutas "stark contrast" between an essentially peaceful Old Europe and an "intrinsically aggressive population" from the steppes, with the claim that "warfare of some sort would appear to be a universal in human societies." Yet he too recognizes that the "frequency of its occurrence might vary considerably over region, people or time." See his entry "Warfare" in J. P. Mallory and D. Q. Adams (630).

peoples of the steppes, Scythians, Huns, Mongols, were a "new sort of people" in being "warriors for war's sake, for the loot it brought, the risks, the thrill, the animal satisfactions of triumph." But Keegan is another historian who remains silent on the Indo-Europeans, and believes that the Scythians were the "first steppe people" (1994: 188–89, 180). Still, if we agree that the Indo-European were a people of the steppes, the first horseback riders and inventors of chariots, we can make the inference that they were the first peoples from the steppes to engage in warfare for the sake of the joys, the risks, and the prestige it brought.

Yet, at the same time, we should avoid the converse error of delinking the martial temperament of the IE peoples from their pastoral way of life. Keegan is aware of this, and in response to the question "why should…pastoralists…have been more warlike than their hunting ancestors or agricultural neighbors," he answers that young pastoralists had to "learn to kill, and to select for killing" their domesticated animals. "It was flock management, as much as slaughter and butchery, which made the pastoralists so cold-bloodedly adept at confronting the sedentary agriculturalists" (160–61). This answer, however, is limited. In the first instance, Keegan is viewing warfare for its own sake in downbeat terms, and, in the second, he is abstracting one datum – killing young, nimble animals – from a whole way of life. The Indo-European economic lifestyle included fierce competition for grazing rights for specific areas, constant alertness in the defense of one's portable wealth, and an expansionist disposition in a world in which competing herdsmen were motivated to seek new pastures as well as tempted to take the movable wealth (cattle) of their neighbors. This life required not just the skills of a butcher but a life span of horsemanship and arms (conflict, raids, violence) which brought to the fore certain mental dispositions including aggressiveness and individualism, in the sense that each individual, in this male-oriented atmosphere, needed to become as much a warrior as a herds-man.

Indo-Europeans were also uniquely ruled by a class of *free* aristocrats. In very broad terms, I define as "aristocratic" a state in which the ruler, the king, or the commander-in-chief is *not* an autocrat who treats the upper classes as unequal servants but is a "peer" who exists in a spirit of equality as one more warrior of noble birth. This is not to say that leaders did not enjoy extra powers and advantages, or that leaders were not tempted to act in tyrannical ways. It is to say that in aristocratic cultures, for all the intense rivalries between families and

individuals seeking their own renown, there was a strong ethos of aristocratic egalitarianism against despotic rule.

Let me pull together a number of traits I have found in the literature which, in their combination, point to a life of aristocratic equality, vigorous, free, and joyful activity. First, all Indo-European cultures from the "earliest" times in the 5th millennium have seen the presence of warriors who sought to demonstrate their standing and wealth, by dressing in "ostentatious" ways; for example, with long or multiple belts and necklaces of copper beads, copper rings, copper spiral bracelets, gold fittings in their spears and javelins – with variations of styles depending on place and time but all demonstrative of an "*individualizing* ideology" (Anthony: 160, 237, 251, 259–63).[28] Second, the Indo-European warriors "were interred as *personalities* showing off the equipment of life and their personal position in a final *coup de theatre*, rather than joining a more anonymous community of ancestors" (Sherratt 2001a: 192). Kurgan burials commemorated the deaths of special males; the stone circles and mounds, and the emphasis on "prestige weapons and insignia," were intended to isolate and self-aggrandize the achievements of warriors (Anthony: 245).[29] Third, they developed a distinctive tradition of feasting and drinking, in which "*individual* hospitality rather than great communal ceremonies" dominated the occasions. These feasts – backed by a "prestige goods

[28] Diodorus Siculus, a Greek historian of the 1st century BC, had this to say of the Celts: "The clothing they wear is striking: tunics and breeches dyed and embroidered in various colours…They were bracelets on their wrists and arms, and heavy necklaces of solid gold, rings of great value and even corselets" (in Allen: 111-12). The Celts, I might add, were on average of the same height as the Mycenaeans at 5 feet 7 inches tall (some Celtic princes have been measured at just over 6 feet).

[29] Gimbutas sees the Kurgan mounds as the "most distinctive" archeological remain of the Indo-Europeans. She observes as well that Kurgans "singled out" male warriors, "in contrast to Old Europe, where both sexes were buried together," and where burials were "collective" (1997: 351–54). She thinks that the fact that both sexes were buried together reflected the "sex-egalitarian nature of Old Europe," whereas the singled male burials reflected "low esteem" in which women were held in Kurgan culture (354). Anthony agrees that Kurgans were intended to highlight male prowess, but he brings up new research (329) showing that about 20% and sometimes 50% of the central graves contained adult females. Bogucki observes that in the Middle Bronze Age in Europe (1800–1500 BC), the number of women buried under mounds increased (1999: 279). Timothy Earle, whom I shall refer to below in regards to the "individualizing" chiefdoms of aristocratic cultures, observes that female graves included items of personal decoration, which he takes as showing that female status was "identified with jewelry that signaled personal distinctiveness and attractiveness" (1997: 164). This rather revealing point has gone unexplored; it seems reasonable and consistent with the individualizing character of Indo-European aristocratic culture.

economy" – were "cheerful" events of gift-giving and gift-taking, performance of poetry praising individual deeds, and animal sacrifices (2001b: 253; Anthony: 343, 391). These feats served as a great opportunity for warriors with higher status and wealth, in this world of constant small-scale raids and persistent inter-tribal conflicts, to acquire the greatest number of clients. They were also an opportunity for the less powerful or younger warriors to attach themselves to patrons who offered opportunities for loot and glory. The more followers the patron could recruit, the greater the expectation of success to be gained by all. Fourth, as Gimbutas clearly articulated, and as Anthony (93) has further noted, this was a culture in which "all [the] most important deities lived in the sky." While Gimbutas described these sky gods in negative terms as the gods of a belligerent people, one may see them as the gods of an energetic, life-affirming people whose gods were personified as celestial heroes and chieftains. The sky-gods of the Indo-Europeans reflected – to use the words of Dawson (2002) – their "intensely masculine and warlike ethics, their mobility." If the gods of Egypt and Mesopotamia demanded unquestioned submission to their will, passive acceptance; and if the female deities of Old Europe – to borrow the language of Camille Paglia (1991) – represented the "earth's bowels," and embodied the "chthonian drama of an endless round, cycle upon cycle," the sky-gods of Indo-Europeans furnished a vital, action-oriented, and linear picture of the world.[30] Finally, I would highlight

[30] The Celtic gods, writes John Corcoran, existed "in the climate engendered by the warrior-aristocratic society of their period…" "The strongly marked aristocratic nature of Celtic society in the days of independence [before Roman subjugation] suggests that the mythology relates to the gods of the aristocracy…" E. Tonnelat writes of the Germanic gods that they "were never thought of as more than men of superior essence…" They "were conceived by a warlike people…the Teutonic gods were nearly all distinguished for their warlike virtues." He continues: "The basic structure of the Teutonic pantheon is a concept shared by all the Indo-European peoples, who are to be distinguished from all other cultural groups…" He carefully adds that not all Indo-European gods were "sky-gods" and male gods. There were important goddesses, such as Frija, the wife of Odin (said to be the principal god of the Germanic people) who "shared his wisdom and foresight" (in Felix Guirand's, *The New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology* 1984: 244, 252, 273). For Gimbutas, the process of Indo-Europeanization of Old Europe resulted in the hybridization of two mythological structures within which the Indo-European prevailed but the Old mythology survived as an undercurrent; see *The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe*, 147–50, 196–200. Corcoran also speaks of the Celtic-Irish goddess Macha as perhaps "a survival of a mother-goddess worshipped in parts of Ireland prior to the arrival of the Celts" (229). He notes that in some stories Macha "appears as a warrior-queen in her own right." The notion that the patriarchal mythology of the Indo-European peoples brought about a degradation of women is not consistent with the presence of goddesses who, "though few in number," as

the purely aristocratic manner by which Indo-Europeans organized themselves into war-bands (*koiros*, brotherhood). The nature of this association might be better understood if we were to start by describing Indo-European society as different levels of social organization. The lowest level, and the smallest unit of society, consisted of families residing in farmsteads and small hamlets, practicing mixed farming with livestock representing the predominant form of wealth. The next tier consisted of a clan of about five families with a common ancestor. The third level consisted of several clans – or a tribe – sharing the same.[31] Those members of the tribe who owned livestock were considered to be free in the eyes of the tribe, with the right to bear arms and participate in the tribal assembly. Although the scale of complexity of Indo-European societies changed considerably with the passage of time, and the Celtic tribal confederations that were in close contact with Caesar's Rome during the 1st century BC, for example, were characterized by a high concentration of both economic and political power, these confederations were still ruled by a class of free aristocrats. In classic Celtic society, real power within and outside the tribal assembly was wielded by the most powerful members of the nobility, as measured by the size of their clientage and their ability to bestow patronage. Patronage could be extended to members of other tribes as well as to free individuals who were lower in status and were thus tempted to surrender some of their independence in favor of protection and patronage.

Now, in addition to these relations of clientage, Indo-European nobles were grouped into war-bands. These bands were freely constituted associations of men operating independently from tribal or

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Tonnelat also observes in the case of Germanic mythology, "reveal themselves on the occasion to be fearful in battle" (252). Snell says that the Homeric gods reflect "the graceful stamp of an aristocratic society…Throughout his poems Homer has his gods appear in such a manner that they do not force man down into the dust; on the contrary, when a god associates with a man, he elevates him, and makes him free, strong, courageous, certain of himself." He also notes that an essential feature of Homeric religion is "the suppression of all chthonian elements including the worship of Mother Earth…" Yet, at the same time, he writes that the "ladies of Mount Olympus, Hera, Athena, Artemis and Aphrodite […] in spite of their one-sidedness, are faultless and attractive creatures. With no effort at all they possess the noble simplicity and quiet grandeur which Winckelmann regarded as the essence of the classical spirit. But the original Greek temper surpasses this classicistic ideal. The Olympians have their full share of the passions…vitality, beauty, and lucidity" (23–42).

[31] For a detailed linguistic assessment of the "four divisions of [Indo-European] society," see Benveniste (1973: 239–61). I only refer to three divisions, but, below, I bring up another social group, the war-bands.

kinship ties. They could be initiated by any powerful individual on the merits of his martial abilities. The relation between the chief and his followers was personal and contractual: the followers would volunteer to be bound to the leader by oaths of loyalty wherein they would promise to assist him while the leader would promise to reward them from successful raids. The sovereignty of each member was thus recognized even though there was a recognized leader, "the first among equals." These "groups of comrades," to use Indo-European vocabulary, were singularly dedicated to predatory behavior and to "wolf-like" living by hunting and raiding, and to the performance of superior, even superhuman deeds.[32] The members were generally young, unmarried men, thirsting for adventure. The followers were sworn not to survive a war-leader who was slain in battle, just as the leader was expected to show in all circumstances a personal example of courage and war-skills.

It is worth adding in this context Heiko Steuer's observation that the so-called "folk [mass] movements" of Celts, Germans, and Scandinavians (during the 1st millennium AD) were actually initiated by war-bands – which could number up to 2000 to 3000 men. These movements, he writes, were "not the migrations of tribes with the whole family… but rather campaigns of warrior bands whose wars only much later led to the occupation of land" (2006: 228). This is the way he describes, for example, the movements of Alamans, Franks and Saxons into the Roman Empire – as raids led by bands, followed by "folk" movements.

However, in contrast to Steuer, who emphasizes the need on the part of war lords to ensure a steady supply of resources for their entourage, I would accentuate the search for prestige and immortality. Young men born into noble families were not only driven by economic needs and the spirit of adventure, but also by a deep-seated psychological need for honor and recognition – a need nurtured not by nature as such but by a cultural setting in which one's noble status was maintained in and through the risking of one's life (berserker style) in a battle to the death for pure prestige. This competition for fame amongst war-band

[32] See the entries "Army" and "Warriors" in J. P. Mallory and D. Q. Adams (30–31; 631–35). Todd notes, in his study of ancient Germans, that a successful retinue or war band could break away entirely from its tribe of origin and form a new grouping; the cement holding the retinue was less clan or kindred relations than the ability of a leader to promise and deliver fortune; a known leader could attract men from different tribes (1992: 30–2).

members (partially outside the ties of kinship) could not but have had an individualizing effect upon the warriors. Hence, although band members ("friend-companions", or "partners"[33]) belonged to a cohesive and loyal group of like-minded individuals, they were not swallowed up anonymously within the group.[34]

The Impact of Indo-Europeans on the Civilizations of the East

There is a crucial difference in the historical effects of those Indo-Europeans who migrated to the Near East and those who migrated into Greece and Old Europe. This difference has been strangely neglected by Indo-Europeanists. In contrast to the radical transformations we saw in Europe, the Indo-European invaders who came into Anatolia, Syria, and Mesopotamia were eventually assimilated to the far more advanced civilizations of this region. Although the Hittites were masters of the central Anatolian region, and their language was the imperial language of their empire created about 1650 BC, it is clear from the clay tablets covering the period from about 1650 to 1200 BC, that they had undergone considerable assimilation. Many words in their language, including the very name "Hittite", were borrowed from a language called "Hattic," which was spoken by the predominant aborigines of central Anatolia. Their religion and their culture at large

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[33] See "Companion" in J. P. Mallory and D. Q. Adams (115–16).

[34] All the aristocratic traits I have outlined in this paper were to be found, in varying degrees and through the influx of new cultural movements, from the early Bronze Age through to the Iron Age and Middle Ages. See Anthony Harding, "Reformation in Barbarian Europe, 1300–600 BC;" Barry Cunliffe, "Iron Age Societies in Western Europe and Beyond, 800–140 BC"; Barry Cunliffe, "The Impact of Rome on Barbarian Society, 140 BC-AD 1300," Malcolm Todd, "Barbarian Europe, AD 300–700," in Barry Cunliffe (2001). See also Allen, *Lords of Battle* (2007: 60-83; 109–141), and Todd (1992: 29–46). But other than Speidel's observation that the mind of the berserker "was much the same… as that of medieval warriors two thousand years later," no one has put the dots together showing that these traits persisted across millennia from the early Indo-European speakers who came from the steppes to the feudal warriors of Christian Europe. Cunliffe (2008) accentuates the heroic aristocratic character of the peoples of the steppes, the Corded Ware culture, the Bell Beakers, the Macedonians, Nordic peoples of the Bronze Age, the peoples from the Carpathian Basin region, the Hallstatt zone, the Celts, the Romans, the Germans, the Vikings, and other cultures of "footloose warrior lords" – yet he does not tie these observations together and neither does he speak of Europe's uniqueness in these terms. Instead, he argues that what made Europeans peculiarly "restless" was the "mobile" geography of the European peninsula. He also thinks that the Indo-European language came into Europe with the Near Eastern farmers who brought agriculture after 7000 BC.

were also heavily infused with indigenous elements. Mallory notes (28) that Hittite culture has always been difficult to distinguish from its non-Indo-European neighbors; the Hittites appeared to have "embraced thoroughly the local cultures," displaying "no obvious cultural traits that mark them off as distinctive." Mallory, however, makes this observation without contrasting it to the experience of Indo-European speakers in the rest of Europe.

Anthony adds that the early speakers of Hittite constituted not just a minority (as all Indo-Europeans did even in the less advanced cultures of Europe) but a minority living in a cultural landscape dominated by non-Indo-European speakers "who had already founded cities, acquired literate bureaucracies, and established Kingdoms and palace cults." It is noteworthy that they borrowed Hattic words for "throne," "king," "heir apparent," and for a wide variety of bureaucratic positions or functions – which are indicative of Indo-European acculturation to non-aristocratic forms of government. Moreover, while Luwian (another Indo-European language which arrived into Anatolia around the same period) was spoken over a wider area than Hittite, it too borrowed from other non-Indo-European languages. In any case, Hittite and Luwian are now extinct, with no new Indo-European dialects emerging out of them.

The Indo-Iranians who came into the lands of Iran and India did have a considerable cultural influence. Pre-Indo-Iranian was an eastern steppe dialect of Proto-Indo-Europeans, which must have existed at the latest about 2500–2300 BC. Common Indo-Iranian was probably the tongue of the Sintashta culture located at the eastern border of the Pontic Caspian steppe, southeast of the Urals, during the period 2100–1800 BC. The Sintashta era saw a significant increase in the intensity of warfare. Contacts between the peoples of the eastern steppes and Central Asia became much more visible during the period 2000–1800. Around 1900 BC there was an actual migration of chariot-driving Indo-Iranian tribes from the steppes into Central Asia…By 1600 all the old trading towns and cities of eastern Iran had been abandoned as Indo-Iranian speakers with their pastoral economies spread across this region. Archaic old Indic probably emerged as a separate language from archaic Iranian about 1800–1600. Old Indic speakers pushed eastward into the Punjab around 1500, where the *Rig-Veda* was compiled about 1500–1300 (Anthony: 389–454). The Vedas pictured a people of enormous pride with a fondness for feasting, dancing, and for making war.

But while the *Rig-Veda* was "decidedly pastoral" in its values and practices, the number of non-Indo-European words contained in the 1,028 hymns of this classic text suggest "a close cultural relationship" between Indo-Iranian speakers and the old native folk (455–56). The Indic speakers who moved into the Indus valley came into an area already inhabited by a civilized culture known as "Harappan," and as the Aryans penetrated deeper into the Ganges river around Banaras, century after century, "they gradually gave up their pastoral habits and settled into agricultural life"(Roberts 1995: 120). This settled agriculture involved the cultivation of semi-arid areas by means of river irrigation. As the Rig-Veda reported, "[t]hey made fair fertile fields, they brought the rivers. Plants spread everywhere over the desert, waters filled the hollows" (Kulke and Rothermund 1995: 42). The importance of this point, which I can only outline here, is that this river-based agriculture took on an "agro-bureaucratic" character, as centralized patterns of irrigation and social control became the order of the day in the handling of water supplies though public works, canals, aqueducts, reservoirs and dikes. This economy led to the rise of what Karl Wittfogel (1957) famously called a "hydraulic state." As a result, by the late Vedic period (after 1000 BC) the power of the aristocratic tribal assemblies started to dwindle and then be replaced by a new kind of politics centered on a king, who formed a rudimentary administrative system known as "Jewel Bearers" which included the chief priest, the courtiers, and palace officials. The "early Vedic tradition of aristocratic tribal republics was eclipsed in the Late Vedic period" (Kulke and Rothermund: 43).

Similarly, the pastoralists who moved into the land of Iran came to fall within the orbit of a hydraulic system of agriculture and a form of "despotic" rule lacking an independent, private-property-based aristocracy. Thus, by the time of the Achaemenid dynasty, we hear Darius (522–486 BC) sounding like a Mesopotamian or Egyptian ruler who appears to be the only character with any individuality and heroic achievement: "I am Darius the Great King, King of Kings, King of Persia." He was ultimately buried in a royal tomb intended as a colossal glorification of the king. While I sympathized with Pierre Briant's effort to revise the ancient Greek perception of the Persian monarchy as "despotic," I have to disagree with the way he uses the term "aristocracy" to designate the elite members of the satrapal system of the Persian state. Briant calls "aristocratic" any leading member of the administration and army who happened to enjoy economic luxury, high status,

and legal privileges (2002: 338–54). It is rather revealing, nevertheless, that in the same sentence in which he writes that the "Achaemenid satrap was not merely a civil servant, in the dismissive sense this term has in our contemporary society," he adds that the satrap "depended personally on the King, and he had to behave as a faithful *bandaka*; moreover, he was closely watched by the central authority" (340).

Hanson thinks that the word "bandaka" is equivalent to the English word "slave" (2001: 34). Briant defines it as a person who is "simultaneously subject and loyal to the king" (324–25). What does it mean to say "subject" and "loyal"? Briant does not elaborate; but let us note that the Persian titles of the king's relatives and closest advisors have been variously translated as "king's friends," the king's beneficiaries," "the eyes and ears of the king," "bow carrier," etc. Moreover, while it is true that Persia, like India, produced an epic literature (*Shahname*) with heroic characters that reflected the aristocratic influence of the "Aryan" warriors, we should not underestimate the uniquely Oriental, as well as Persian, practice of prostration, of kneeling before the Great King, which was required of all *subjects* and foreigners. The ancient Greeks themselves saw this custom of worshipping rulers as gods as an act of subservience, as a symbolic confirmation of the great divergence between Eastern and Hellenic notions of individualism and political authority.[35]

"Big Man" Feasting and the Origins of Inequality

The question is inevitable: Do we not find countless tribal societies and chiefdoms led by warriors motivated by the pursuit of personal power and prestige among their fellows? Let me start answering this question by recalling the arguments of Snooks, Hayden, and Bogucki, which I endorsed in some measure in chapter one: any society will include some "individual aggrandizers" who will "aggressively strive to enhance their own self-interest over those of other community members." This means that a "tendency toward inequality is inherent in all

[35] More on this later; see also Karl Wittfogel (1957: 153, 205, 265). Wittfogel's "hydraulic hypothesis" clearly needs qualification because some components of it no longer stand up to current research. Regardless, his concomitant argument that there was a lack of an aristocratic class in the East remains valid even though he obscures it by contrasting East and West in terms of the presence (or not) of an independent, property owning, capitalistic class.

societies" (Hayden 1995: 20).This tendency, as Cashdan noted (1980: 119–20), was restrained among hunters and gatherers because it was in the self-interest of everyone to share resources. But with new economic opportunities, and the possibility of producing a surplus over and above the subsistence needs of the community, the individual aggrandizers were afforded with opportunities to accumulate resources.

Hayden believes that one of the best strategies devised by aggrandizers was feasting. He starts from the premise that self interest is "the ultimate determining force behind human behavior," and that *some* individuals are more ambitious and aggressive than others in the pursuit of their self-interest (1995: 23). Given these assumptions, Hayden tries to explain why the less ambitious but self-interested members of a community would come to view the aggrandizing behavior of some individuals as being in their self-interest. Hayden explains that, as more goods became potentially available than what the community strictly needed, the aggrandizers were able to devise clever power-grabbing schemes by which to gain access over those extra surpluses. The preparation and the hosting of feasts with surplus goods was the most common strategy used in simple horticultural societies to advance one's interest.

Hayden is possibly the foremost authority on the relationship between feasting and the origins of inequality. Feasting has been a universal feature of human societies much like kinship, marriage, and language. One of its traditional functions in hunting and gathering societies was to establish support networks for the many risks that confronted individual survivors (Hayden 2001). However, since most feasts were reciprocal and involved the giving of prestigious foods, they were susceptible to the manipulation of ambitious individuals. Aggrandizers could use the feasts as a means to engender obligations on the part of the recipients; and as potential surpluses became available in complex hunting and gathering societies or simple farming communities, this is what happened. Aggrandizers were able to exercise, with greater freedom, their ambitions by attracting allies to assist them in the preparation of feasts. They would give out food and gifts and in this way establish obligatory relations on the part of the recipients.

But why would individuals who follow their self interest allow themselves to become dependent on gift-giving aggrandizers? I would add to Hayden's scenario the following Hobbesian context. First, households in simple horticultural societies were living in a "state of nature" – in societies lacking central authorities able to regulate disputes and

enforce order and, in which, therefore, conflicts between families and villages were endemic. The disputes were over such everyday things including the stealing of animals or wives, illicit relationships, injuries from dogs, territorial boundaries, inheritances and unpaid debts. In this context, it was in the self interest of individuals to align themselves with dominant aggrandizers and their factions.

As potentially exploitable surpluses became available, under certain techno-environmental circumstances, aggrandizers began to compete for superior prestige by attracting followers and allies who reasoned that it was in their self interest to assist in the preparation of feasts. Others calculated that it was in their interest to consume the goods offered by aggrandizers, if only because they were in need, or because they calculated that belonging to a big man's network, with its reciprocal obligations, offered them greater security in the state of nature.

Followers were willing to sacrifice their equality vis-à-vis the aggrandizers in return for the benefits of belonging to a strong faction. This is how aggrandizers promoted themselves to important roles – such as lineage head and village administrator – by assembling factions to support their ambitions. The aggrandizers "had to provide tangible benefits" such as some share in the feasting, rights to membership in the big man's networks, and security. Hayden observes that individuals who did not actively participate in group feasts were actually marginalized in terms of these benefits, and relegated to poverty, including denigration to the status of servants and slaves (1995: 74).

We saw in chapter one that cultural anthropologists and sociologists who accepted the socialistic notion that humans are naturally egalitarian came to the conclusion that the seemingly self-interested behavior of big men was group-oriented and collectivist. Marvin Harris thus argued (1975: 111) that the competitive behavior of big men was accepted by the villagers because it functioned to increase the ecological adaptability of the community by raising its overall output. Now, Hayden agrees that the aggrandizer's behavior would not have been accepted if it had been devoid of favorable ecological consequences. The difference is that he does not lose sight of the reality that big men were seekers of unequal power and wealth. The feaster was not distributing goods for the sake of being well-regarded. A key cultural feature of the feast was "the public reckoning of the receiving group's or individual's obligations to return an equal or better amount of food and gifts received" (1995: 40). These "contractual debts" were, in fact, a more important feature of feasting than redistribution *per se* (24).

The giving of gifts to others was done in contexts that generated "recognized and binding obligations or other expected practical benefits." The power came from the creation of social debt among the people attending the feast. The aggrandizer, by redistributing his own resources to the attendees at the feast, many of whom did not have the means to reciprocate in kind, was able to expand the number of people who were in an asymmetrical relationship to him.

Feasters, to be sure, were not always successful because sometimes there were risks involved; the "greater the potential gain, the greater the risks people were willing to take" (1995: 69–70). The important point is that successful feasters did enjoy the biggest families, the ability to broker the best bride, the most domestic animals, the best land, and the most prestigious trade goods.

However, I have a disagreement with Hayden's claim that the issue was not prestige *per se* but the actual economic and environmental effects of feasting. He cites (68) Clarke and Blake (1989), to the effect that "prestige", "status" and "rank" are merely words ("emic euphemisms") used in place of terms such as "successful" or "dominant" that might be considered too direct or offensive to community members and to the supporters who expected aggrandizers to avoid appearing selfish. What Hayden really means is that prestige and recognition are vague subjective feelings which humans experience within their minds. They are not observable phenomena and, therefore, not scientifically credible concepts.

This is a most unfortunate mistake. Insight is insight regardless of whether or not it is "physical" or "mental".[36] I agree that the desire for prestige cannot be disconnected from the evolutionary/adaptive requirements of societies and the practical/material interests of humans. As I pointed out in chapter one, the desire for superior recognition is ultimately rooted in what Gat calls "first level" somatic and

[36] John Clark and Michael Blake start their article (1989, the one cited by Hayden) stating that the "development of hereditary rank distinction" was the outcome of competition among aggrandizing actors "vying for prestige". They acknowledge the obvious techno-environmental circumstances under which actors survive, but they nevertheless initiate their thesis with the proposition that "the engine" which brought about social change was "self-interested competition among actors vying for prestige or social esteem" (17–30) – yet, in the end, they make no distinction between prestige-seeking motivations and self-interested economic behavior. They offer, nevertheless, a far more realistic account of human agency than that found in the popularly admired work of Diamond, which essentially de-humanizes human behavior by viewing it from the side of its reactions to external pressures.

reproductive drives. But as I also suggested, we should not neglect the mental and emotional aspects of the desire for prestige. Let me elaborate a little further. As G.H. Mead observed, individuals develop a sense of self only by sensing and interpreting how others see them (Honneth 1996). The possibility of realizing whether one's feasting was successful was not something one could have ascertained as a self-interested ego. The acquisition of a "big man" status was an intersubjective process whereby one's attitude toward oneself – whether one was acknowledged or not as the lineage head – was made possible in and through one's encounter with the assessment of others. The very possibility of identity-formation as a lineage head depended crucially on the development of one's self-esteem as acquired and maintained intersubjectively through being granted prestige by members of the community.

Prestige-Seeking Chiefs

The importance humans attach to the pursuit of prestige may be more obvious in the case of the more extravagant and "wasteful" feasts held in intensive horticultural societies or "chiefdoms". This may seem paradoxical in that the evolutionary and practical need for competitive feasting decreases in chiefdom-level societies, since the power of the chief is now inheritable and competition between ambitious chiefs involves the conquest of new lands and the subordination of whole villages into the bottom of the settlement hierarchy. Hayden thus argues that competitive feasts aimed at the creation of hierarchies are primarily a feature of "big man" or "transegalitarian" societies. He observes that the acquisition and maintenance of power in chiefdoms is a matter of enforceable tribute systems, warfare, and the procurement of permanent labor pools (1995: 63–64). Chiefs were expected to perform certain public functions and give goods to the community (especially to their sub-chiefs) but their power was now hereditary and no longer contingent on the provision of goods to create debts.

There is, nevertheless, abundant ethnographic evidence showing that competitive feasting did continue in some chief-level societies. While I am not competent to judge with authority the nature of competitive feasting in chief-level societies, I think it is rather revealing that some chiefdoms witness an ever-escalating cycle of labor mobilization and economic surpluses to finance highly extravagant and seemingly uneconomical feasts (Friedman 1979). The best studied

example of "challenge feasts" is the so-called rivalry potlatch of Native Americans such as the Kwakiutl of the Northwest coast. Ruth Benedict, in her classic work, *Patterns of Culture*, put forth the theory that these potlatches were the product of the "obsessive megalomaniacal desires" of the chiefs ([1934] 1959: 194). She noted how the "the will to superiority" "was expressed in every detail of their potlatch exchanges." The potlatches were public displays of gift-giving mixed with hostility toward rival chiefs. The hosting chiefs would engage in "uncensored self-glorification and ridicule of all comers." It is worth citing some of the hymns the chief's retainers would sing every time a potlatch was held in front of the "great boat-loads of nobles [who] came from distant tribes" (190–95):

> "I am the great chief who makes people ashamed."
>
> "Our chief makes people cover their faces by what he is continually doing in this world, giving again and again oil feasts to all the tribes."
>
> "I search among all the invited chiefs for greatness like mine. I cannot find one chief among the guests. They never return feasts…They disgrace themselves"
>
> "Ah, do not ask in vain for mercy and raise your hands, you with lolling tongues. I only laugh at him, I sneer at him who empties [the boxes of property] in his house, his potlatch house, the inviting house where we are made hungry" (190–92).[37]

Clearly, these are the words of chiefs demanding more than a humble kind of self-respect for their benevolent acts of distribution. Some chiefs would give away all their property, pour oil on their dwelling and burn it to the ground just so to be admired as the highest chiefs. Benedict noted that the "highest glory" in these tribes was one's willingness to destroy one's property in a daring challenge to rivals to destroy "an equal amount of valuable goods." Hosting chiefs would jeer at visiting chiefs, questioning their abilities, and daring them to hold better potlatches. It was incumbent upon the recipients of great gifts to organize better feasts to expunge their shame and reassert their honor.

This "psychological" explanation, however, was found wanting in the 1960s and 1970s when anthropologists were increasingly predisposed to the belief that North American tribal societies were communal and redistributive. This explanation was also regarded with great

[37] I have taken these sentences from separate hymns.

skepticism for not squaring well with the "objective" study of social life and the practical, evolutionary conditions of human existence. In a well known paper, Stuart Piddocke (1965) thus explained the potlatch "system" in terms of the environmental conditions in the Northwest coast. He noted sharp seasonal variations in plant and animal resources in the localities of the tribes of this region; in some years some tribes were the beneficiaries of bountiful resources while others were on the leaner end of seasonal fluctuations; the potlatch "system" in this context arose as an adaptive mechanism for a more balanced redistribution of resources between the tribes, as it functioned to serve the long term interests of each local tribe by ensuring the survival and well-being of the whole tribal federation. Marvin Harris followed Piddocke's argument but emphasized the rational capacity of humans to employ strategies that were beneficial to their survival. He dismissed Benedict's interpretation for its reliance on "inscrutable forces and deranged personalities" rather than on "practical and mundane factors" (1975a: 111–30).

But why would chiefs heap scorn and ridicule over their competitors, even to the point of burning their own dwellings, when they could have chosen to redistribute their extra resources in plain cooperative fashion without self-glorification and evolutionary wastefulness? I think there is more to the potlatches. Laure Lee Junker's *Raiding, Trading and Feasting: The Political Economy of Philippine Chiefdoms* (1999) addresses, in a less reductionist way, the importance of prestige in both "big man" and chief-level societies. Focusing on the Philippines, she observes that feasting in chief-level societies "was overtly competitive" (324). She questions Hayden's argument that competitive feasting largely came to an end with the rise of chiefdoms. This may have been true, she explains, for highly centralized chiefdoms, but not for the chiefdoms of the Philippines, where environmental conditions made it difficult for chiefs to pursue competitive strategies based on territorial conquest and inheritance of authority. In the Philippines, one's political authority had to be "renegotiated continually," and for this reason the institution of feasting (324) continued to be a major power strategy alongside raiding, trade, and the capture of slaves. But the point I wish to emphasize now is that, as much as Junker agrees that the objective of the "challenge feasts" was the enhancement of the chief's economic base and political power, she nevertheless provides us with vivid images of chiefs neurotically preoccupied with their status and image in comparison to others.

We learn from Junker's study (313–16) that feasts were major undertakings generally associated with elite life-crisis events (birth, pregnancy, death, illness, marriage) and events critical to the political economy of chiefdoms (chiefly succession, trading, warfare, the agricultural cycle). They worked not only to maintain social cohesion and expand political patronage, but also to reaffirm social rank differentiation; that is, as occasions in which "to symbolize overtly a particular chief's rank in a social hierarchy vis-à-vis other elites" (315). Although Junker does not frame her observations on the importance of prestige in contradistinction to Hayden's sociobiological perspective, the following passage is quite revealing:

> In these feasts, each datu [chief] in turn climbed a ladder to a high ceremonial platform laid out with a lavish meal, at each rung of the ladder reciting the genealogical history that supported his inherited claim to chieftainship and elite status. However, he would also present an even more protracted recital of his personal exploits in trading, raiding, and other wealth-producing activities, attempting to out-boast other attending chiefs and to win a place at the highest ranking ceremonial table. These public recitations and symbolic movement of chiefs up the status ladder allowed the community to compare chiefly prowess and to rank the multiple district chiefs in terms of appropriate levels of deference (319).

This obsession with one's ranking took on a heightened character when it came to the apportionment of the food. One's food portions reflected one's social position. The chief's immediate relatives and other elite men with whom he was strongly allied were generally given the choicest meat dishes. Food apportionment was a primary public measure and affirmation of one's status. It was all done according to strict protocol with some feasts requiring specialists who could memorize the genealogies of the attendees, their wealth, past achievements, and overall ranking. Any feeling of disrespect was the subject of frequent contestation which sometimes resulted in aggressive "meat fights": "Failure to receive the expected meat portion, in recognition of rank and prior prestige payments was considered a public affront that was frequently resolved through violent confrontation" (321–22).

However, I would like to argue that it is only in reference to Indo-European aristocratic berserkers that we can speak in Hegelian terms of a fight to the death for the sake of *pure* prestige. I agree with Hegel that the struggle for recognition, not the self-interested struggle for wealth, is the quintessentially human desire. Thus far in this chapter I

have tried to offer an empirically-based outline of a society dominated by aristocratic elites in which the most honorable goal was undying prestige by risking one's life fighting. Competitive feasters did seek prestige but they did it in a way still heavily conditioned by their economic and evolutionary interests.

The argument I want to advance next is that the pursuit of prestige takes on a more autonomous character, so to speak, with the rise of chiefdoms. But it does so, however, in the context of chiefdoms ruled by free aristocrats. I will argue that two evolutionary trajectories, namely "group-oriented" and "individualizing," evolved from the transegalitarian or ranked societies we have just described. Group oriented trajectories are based on collective (staple) economies controlled by quasi-despotic chiefs, whereas "individualizing" trajectories are based on prestige goods economies controlled by aristocratic chiefs.

From Simple to Paramount Chiefdoms

Let us first describe some of the basic characteristics of chiefdoms. Chiefdoms are ruled by increasingly hereditary aggrandizers. Although successful aggrandizers in ranked or simple horticultural societies enjoyed more wealth and power than commoners, they wielded little coercive control; the feasts were competitive, and their position was not hereditary. The "big man" status rested on the entrepreneurial energy, charisma, and skills of the aggrandizers, who were heads of their own extended family, to which they offered patronage and assistance in difficult times. Big men carried more authority, but the village decisions were reached by tribal assemblies of all free men (Sahlins 1968).

However, as the growth of property differences became more marked, "ranked" societies were transformed into "stratified" societies and big men into chiefs (Diamond 1997). The stratified chiefs are commonly referred to as an "aristocracy" in that their power is no longer based solely on kinship but on their own armed retinues, dependents, and clients, and warfare is a major maximizing strategy (Snooks 1995). But let's be careful. Three types of chiefdoms have been identified along an evolutionary continuum in the direction of greater stratification and concentration of power: "simple," "complex," and "paramount" chiefdoms (Bogucki 1999: 264). Earlier chiefdoms did enjoy a semblance of kin and tribal fraternity, but later ones were political entities with formal systems of tribute and tax extraction (Earle 1991).

The most studied advanced chiefdoms include those of Tonga, Society Islands, Tahiti, Peru, and Hawaii. The population of some of these consisted of tens of thousands of members, headed by several, pyramidal grades of sub-chiefs, with a paramount chief at the top. In the 1960s and 1970s, it was commonly believed that chiefdoms in general were kin-based societies operating on the voluntary contributions of tribal members to do the work that was required for survival (Fried 1967). Chiefs were seen as organizers and coordinators of resources for the mutual benefit of various groups (Service 1975). In more recent years, however, the view has come to prevail, as we saw above, that chiefs were aggressive individuals willfully engaged in aggrandizing strategies, collecting surpluses from the commoners to establish and enforce their dominion over time and compete successfully with other chiefs. Chiefdoms, from what we currently know, were continually at war and leadership was vested in war leaders (Carneiro 1981). Then again, chiefs did undertake public activities, such as the building and maintenance of irrigation works, storage of food, conduct of long distance trade, and, of course, military protection and expansion, all which were simply too complex and important for individual households to handle.

Gat says that the societies Julius Caesar wrote about in his *The Gallic War* (58 BC–51 BC) were already highly stratified, "with chiefs and 'big men' transformed into a powerful aristocracy" (2006: 212). Caesar's book, Gat says, is full of ethnographic observations on how the old tribal assemblies of Celtic society "has been reduced in significance, and ordinary men had all but lost their say." The impression Gat leaves is that the Celts had ceased to be a "ranked" society led by big men. He cites Caesar: "The most powerful chiefs, and such as had the means to hire men, commonly endeavored to make themselves king" (212). The Celts were apparently on their way to becoming a state with a monarchical ruler. Gat also draws attention to the observations Caesar made about the Germans as a "more egalitarian tribal society" than that of the Celts. Gat then states that by the time Tacitus came to write his *Germania* (AD 98), he encountered chief-like Germanic societies that were not as developed as the Celts of the 1st century BC but were, nevertheless, ruled by powerful aristocratic chiefs who competed with each other as leaders of their own retinue of warriors.

According to Gat, these German chieftains were close in their evolutionary development to the Celts referred to by the historian Polybius (203–120 BC). Again, Gat is under the impression that the Germans

Caesar observed were members of a "transegalitarian" (or simple horticultural) society. They were not. The Indo-European cultures which spread throughout Europe (2800–1300 BC) were all "Bronze Age" chiefdoms. The Corded Ware/Single Burial culture that emerged in the North European Plain at the beginning of the 3rd millennium, the Bell Beaker phenomenon that spread across western Europe later in the 3rd millennium, the boat-building maritime heroic tradition that was visible around the North Sea during the middle of the 2nd millennium, the Urnfield Late Bronze Age culture (1300-800 BC), followed by the Hallstatt Early Iron Age culture (800–480 BC), and then by the La Tene culture (from 400BC to the Roman Conquest), were all chief-level societies of increasing complexity ruled by aristocratic elites (Cunliffe 2008: 167–69, 213–21, 267, 309–16). The Celtic culture Caesar observed was led by paramount chieftains directly controlling simple chiefdoms and indirectly controlling (through tributary relations) complex chiefdoms.

As stated above, I use the term "aristocratic" to designate the continued presence of an ethos of egalitarianism at the top of the chiefly hierarchy. I suspect that Gat's misidentification of Europe's simple chiefdoms as "big man" societies was due to the strong egalitarian spirit still exhibited by these chiefdoms. The war leaders of the Germanic tribes Caesar observed, for example, were chosen *ad hoc* by the tribal assemblies for the duration of the military activity, and the chiefs (not "big men"), as Gat refers to them (213), were freely moving warriors who would compete to attract young warriors eager for adventure and individual renown. The relations between the members of the war bands, as Gat recognizes, were "largely egalitarian, 'brotherhoods' of 'fellows'" (220).

"Eastern" Group-Oriented and "Western" Individualizing Chiefdoms

My view is that an aristocratic egalitarian ethos still permeated the complex and paramount chiefdoms of Late Bronze Age Europe. Scholars have long debated the character and evolution of the chieftaincy (Earle 1989). As I pointed out above, not long ago chiefs were seen as "public servants" who collected surpluses and redistributed them for the common good. Now they are generally viewed as self-seeking aggrandizers (a sociobiological perspective) or as exploiters who inherited their position (a Marxist perspective). Interestingly enough, on the basis of his research on prehistoric *Europe*, and his

knowledge of chiefdoms across the world, Colin Renfrew (1974) developed two basic models of chief-like societies as reflecting either "group-oriented" or "individualizing" interests. In the former, he noted, there was less lavish display of personal wealth and greater emphasis on collective activities and group rituals to integrate the population, with the chief acting as the coordinator and host of ceremonies. In individualizing chiefdoms, there was greater emphasis on personal status and prestige, with a more marked (or, I would say, conspicuous) disparity between the elite and the commoners. There was also less communal and public construction, as the chief and his retinue of warriors were the focus of attention (and, I would add, the units of production consisted of small individual farmsteads).

Scholars soon began to consider the possibility that these two types of chiefdoms indicated two evolutionary trajectories evolving from the tribal "big man" societies. Kristiansen (1991) carefully differentiated these two types of social organization, not as mutually exclusive, but as ideal types, which in actual historical contexts might consist of combined characteristics. Focusing on the economic relations of these two types, he specified that individualizing chiefdoms were dominated by "wealth finance" or "prestige goods economies, whereas collective chiefdoms were dominated by "staple finance" and tributary systems. Staple finance chiefdoms were regulated by "vertical relations of production and exchange" in the sense that chiefly authorities obtained their sources of income by extracting staple goods from the commoners to finance public works, pay the personnel attached to the chief, and trade with other chiefdoms. Wealth finance chiefdoms were characterized by "horizontal relations" whereby chiefs obtained their income by controlling exchange networks, supplies of resources, and decentralized units of farming communities. Kristiansen noted (16–27) that prestige goods economies were mostly linked to segmentary or pastoral societies, while staple economies were linked to collective, territorial, and agricultural societies.

Kristiansen's archeological case studies were focused on Bronze Age European chiefdoms. He believed that the rise of complex chiefdoms in Europe around 1500 BC was linked to an "ideological and military complex of aristocratic warriors" in control of long-distance elite exchange in prestige goods that spread from the Mycenaean area through central Europe and Scandinavia (1991: 27). The supreme chiefs were linked in a relation of dominance to local communities consisting of extended families living in long houses (30 meters long) representing a small population whose leader was the local representative of a

chiefly lineage. The agrarian system of these chiefdoms was based on husbandry of free grazing herds and rotating fields in an open landscape. Kristiansen observed that these local communities with small chieftains predated the rise of complex chiefdoms, with roots going back to the big man societies of the Neolithic era.

It is worth recalling here Eric Jones observation, in *The European Miracle,* that the origins of medieval Europe's mixed farming economy lay in the prehistoric pastoral societies that originated from the steppes. "Europeanness", Jones ventured to say, stemmed from a decentralized, aggressive pastoral economy that arrived from the steppes to be "molded by the forests" of Europe and was thus transformed into a pastoral-agrarian mixed economy, "with a landscape of farmsteads" (2003: 12–13). He contrasted the "open-ended productive environment of forest land and rainfall farming" in Europe to the more centralized, hydraulic river systems of the East, with their mass levies of conscripted peasant labor and authoritarian rule. He further noted that Europe in the 2nd millennium was dominated by warrior elites at the same time that it consisted of farming families which "met in free assemblies with a council and elected their chief" (12). Jones also made reference to a transition in Europe from early Neolithic settlements based on communal systems of full villages, to a system, from the end of the 5th millennium BC, based on extended families living in 100 feet long houses, to a new system, by the end of the 3rd millennium, based on smaller houses, to a society, by the middle of the 2nd millennium, based on nuclear families. Kristiansen's dates are different, and more accurately based, but he too noted that during the Late Bronze Age (1000–500 BC) houses became smaller and more numerous at each settlement (1991: 28).

But this is a far as Kristiansen goes in analyzing the "individualizing" features of European chiefdoms. While his ideas on long term evolutionary trends prove interesting, he paid no attention to the character of aristocratic rule and the nature of individuated farmsteads. He also offered no comparative case studies of "group-oriented" chiefdoms. Rather, he tried to explain the evolutionary dynamics of Europe's chiefdoms using Wallerstein's word-system approach. This approach brought some insights on the historical cycles of evolution and devolution of chiefdoms, and the manner by which chiefly power was dependent on the control of prestige networks linked to "global" networks – networks which were susceptible to economic and political fluctuations across a wide space. In a subsequent full length book, *Europe before History*

(1998), Kristiansen went on to write in detail about chiefdoms but without taking on the Indo-European question, and stating instead that "the Indo-Europeans [as an object of study] have been replaced by autonomous social and economic" processes. He even went so far as to say that he wanted to avoid any notion of "a special European identity" (16)! [38]

Timothy Earle is the one scholar who has addressed, from a comparative perspective, the economic and political character of group-oriented and individualizing chiefdoms. In *How Chiefs Come to Power* (1997) he examines three case studies: Denmark during the Neolithic and Early Bronze Ages (2300–1300), the high Andes of Peru from the early chiefdoms through the Inca conquest (AD 500–1534), and Hawaii from early in its settlement to its incorporation in "the world economy" (AD 800–1824). I will concentrate on the main observations he makes about the prestige character of Denmark and staple character of Hawaii but will also touch on the case of Peru as an example of a less developed staple chiefdom. Overall, it should be noted first that Earle adheres to the basic contrasts we drew above between group-oriented and individualizing chiefdoms. What I would like to do now is describe each society separately and offer a précis of their main observed cultural traits.

Hawaii: Hawaii emerged in an environment characterized by lush tropical forest. The commoners made obligatory payments to the state, and the state in return financed public works. By financing the construction of irrigation canals, chiefs became the owners of the most productive lands. The provision of irrigations works provided great opportunities for the settlement and farming of lands, but "the canals were the lifelines for the farmers." Thus, "the farmers we caged" because they were "dependent on the masters (70–73). The irrigation systems of Hawaii were quite small and did not require large-scale labor mobilization. However, the chief's managers "did routinely oversee the construction and management of irrigation" (78). Each man farmed his plot for his family's subsistence and, in return, he was obligated to

[38] Kristiansen is a leading archeologist of Bronze Age Europe and is based at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. Perhaps this statement should be viewed in the context of Sweden's effort, after the 1980s, to transform and break away from its own "European" identity, as it "envisioned the large-scale advent of non-Europeans and non-Christians" (Runblom 1994: 634). Runblom further observes that "the introduction of Swedish multiculturalism meant a clear break with Swedish traditions" except for the tradition of the Swedish welfare state (636).

farm chiefly land for his "overlords." The ultimate ownership of the land rested with the paramount chief. The paramount chief "delegated to his closest supporters" their powers in relation to the commoners; their titles (positions and rights) in the community were "a political compensation for support and could be rescinded at will" (79). By the time of contact with European colonizers, the chiefs "held *mana*, power that flowed through the individuals and demonstrated their feared divine essence." The "commoners would prostrate themselves or jump overboard to keep below their chiefly gods" (45).

Denmark: Thy, a Danish district located on the northwest side of the Jutland Peninsula, is characterized by an environment of windblown terrain. By the end of 3500–2600 BC, this area supported a modest population of farmers in which simple ranking typical of a big man society was evident. The burial practice suggests a "group identity" in that burials involved the mixing of bones from multiple internments within a central burial chamber that could be repeatedly opened. About 2600 BC, the Single Grave Culture emerges combined with signs of animal herding. "The cultural change represented by these early herders was dramatic" (25–26). The burials no longer emphasized the community but individuals, generally single males with their weapons; there were female burials as well: "males were distinguished by their warrior status, females by personal decoration" (26). Between 2300–1700 BC, this "Bell-Beaker" culture was incorporated within a prestige goods economy that extended from Britain to the Baltic into Central Europe. This was not a highly structured or centralized chiefdom, although there were signs of further stratification or development between 1700–1300 BC.

Earle defines "wealth finance" as the use of prestige goods as political currencies to reward followers and enhance one's status. This is an economy in which elites try to monopolize the exchange of prestige goods by intimidating competitors, or by dominating trade routes (73). It is also an economy requiring chiefs to have control over large herds as sources of goods for the export market as well as control over craftsmen who manufacture sophisticated products (167). This is a mobile economy in which highly valued objects are easily transported over long distances and used to exert obligatory relations (through the gift-giving of prestige goods) over wide spaces. At the same time, this was an economy in which it was difficult to have centralized control, and for this reason one finds many "decentralized" chiefs contesting for control over some of the exchange links (100).

The next question we may ask, which Earle does not pose explicitly, is why were chiefs so preoccupied with the acquisition of "prestige goods"? One can answer with Earle, and with other materialist approaches to the study of culture, that the supply of these goods was the economic mainstay of the chief's power. But I would add that this economy was shaped by the cultural motivation of chiefs struggling for prestige. The individualizing ethos of aristocratic warriors was the engine behind this prestige goods economy. This was an economy responding to the fact that the status of the chiefs was individually associated with the pursuit of prestige in warfare. The acquisition of prestige objects was not the means to acquire status. Rather, the possession of luxurious weapons and personal items symbolized that one had already achieved a high status in warfare. In Earle's words "[p]ersonal clothing and weapons measured the man, to be feared and respected *because of the stories of valor that the objects signified* (159, my italics).

It is also worth noting that insofar as Earle tells us that warfare was "inherently part of the chiefly culture" (132), it is mostly in reference to the individualizing chiefdom of Denmark that he writes of "intense status rivalry played out through military confrontations among those striving to dominate" (131). Generally speaking, warfare was a common maximizing strategy of all chiefdoms, but the goals were not the same. The nature, extent, and ferocity of warfare varied according to economic, demographic, and political conditions. Warfare among Hawaiian chiefdoms was a means to expand the staple base of each chiefly authority, and to protect that base (109, 142). Before the consolidation of complex chiefdoms, warfare tended to be "chaotic and continuous." But with the establishment of relatively stable centers of chiefly authority within given territorial boundaries, warfare changed from being characterized by "unregulated competition" to becoming a means of conquest (109).

Earle observes that (prior to the Inca pacification after AD 1450) the chiefdoms of the Mantaro Valley were constantly fighting over their fields, their animals, and their women. The goals of warfare were economic, but Earle also notes that the legitimacy of Mantaro chiefs rested largely on their success in warfare. Warring confrontations would be instigated as a means to enhance one's status. Successful leaders were described as "valiant, powerful," "brave persons who can defend us from our enemies" (115). Yet, while Earle also emphasizes the economic motivations of Danish warriors, such as control over prestige-goods

networks, he makes regular and emphatic references to the "individualizing" nature of Danish culture and warfare in particular; the single graves and their focus on the individual male warriors; and, the individualizing use of prestige goods and its association with success in warfare (124). He never uses the words "individual" and "personal" in the case of Hawaiian chiefs, and even in the case of the bellicose Mantaro chiefs he says that their symbols of power were "weakly linked" to their role as warriors in that the leaders were not differentiated from the commoners by great differences in the ownership of prestige goods, special metal weapons, and ceramics (191). The chiefs were "apparently not a distinctive class" (161). One could argue that this was due to the fact that Mantaro chiefs were rather undeveloped, simple chiefdoms. Still, the staple oriented character of Mantaro chiefdoms should be contrasted to the more individualizing and prestige oriented simple chiefdoms of Denmark.

This is as far as Earle's work will take us. Earle, acknowledged as one of the foremost authorities on chiefdoms, belongs to a long line of academics (as I argued in chapter one) who believe that it is important to understand the nature and sources of power in the hope that we may look forward to a more egalitarian world in which there will be no coercive power structures. He does not, of course, engage in moral condemnations as to whether "the development of complexity [should be seen] in a good (or bad) light" (209). But he does admit that "personally, I see tremendous loses" in the rise of complex chiefdoms. He cites Sanderson's (1995) argument against the idea of progress. Earle is also a materialist who believes that the alternative paths to complexity followed by Peruvian, Hawaiian, and Danish chiefdoms should be understood in terms of the unique environmental contexts under which they existed. He differentiates "group-oriented" and "individualizing" chiefdoms but he never poses the question as to the differentiating character of their power elite relations. The impression he gives is that the Danish chiefdoms were isolated cases within Europe, even though he knows that Europe was a land of individualizing chiefdoms, and that the Danish chiefs were participants in a European-wide prestige goods economy. His focus is mostly on the "political economy" of Danish chiefly power rather than on its individualizing ethos and the virtues of heroic achievement. "Military power," tout court, is "is the essence of coercive force" (204).

He takes too lightly the *virtues* associated with the ideal hero: physical endurance, agility, fearlessness, audacity, loyalty. In my efforts to

understand the value-judgments of aristocrats, I draw on Nietzsche's idea that it is this character specially who welcomes "a powerful physicality, a blossoming, rich, even effervescent good health which includes the things needed to maintain it, war, adventure, hunting, dancing, jousting and everything else that contains strong, free, happy action (2000b: 18).

Interestingly, Earle actually opens his discussion on Dane chieftains by making reference to the heroic poem *Beowulf*, which was composed around the 8th century AD, but which described a story set in Denmark in the 6th century. I should clarify that by the 8th century one finds a Danish-Scandinavian world which had undergone increased hierarchization with the emergence of chieftains exercising power over extended regions. By the 9th century the historical records even speak of the presence of "national" kings, such as the Danish-Viking king Godfred, capable of organizing the defences of his kingdom against the Frankish Empire (Christiansen 2002). Earle thinks that the heroic ethos exemplified in *Beowulf*, which made reference to "fiercely proud people with regional 'kings' and their supporting warriors," was the same ethos which prevailed in the small-scale, simple chiefdoms in the period between 2300 and 1300 BC. In both societies there was "a strong ethos of chieftain equality" (Earle 1997: 19–20).

In other words, from the simple to the complex chiefdoms of the age of *Beowulf*, one finds a strong ethos of aristocratic egalitarianism despite the augmentation of chiefly power over wider terrains. But Earle is too preoccupied with power as such, and so he does not belabour these observations. Let me add that the established consensus is that *Beowulf* is an "Old English" poem set in the heroic, aristocratic cultures of Scandinavian/Germanic Europe in the 6th century AD. To quote from Michael Alexander's "Introduction" to the Penguin Edition of *Beowulf* (1973):

> Beowulf is a typical heroic poem not only in its central figure but also in its world and in its values. The warriors are either feasting or fighting, they are devoted to glee in hall or glory in the field, or their possessions are gold cups or gold armour, the outward and visible signs of glee and glory.

Alfred David, editor of the widely used *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, *The Middle Ages* (2000), emphasizes as well the ethos of mutual trust and companionship among chieftains and their similarly aristocratic followers:

> In the poetry depicting this warrior society, the most important of human relationships was based less on subordination of one man's will to another's than on mutual trust and respect. When a warrior vowed loyalty to his lord, he became not so much his servant as his voluntary companion…" (29-30).[39]

This aristocratic ethos of companionship and equality is the most important trait of individualizing chiefdoms.[40] I noted earlier that Gat described the Germanic tribes Caesar had written about in the 1st century BC as if they were still big man societies, because the leaders of these tribes were elected by tribal assemblies, and because the relations between the members of the war bands were largely egalitarian. Well, by the time Tacitus was making his own observations a century and half after Caesar, these Germanic tribes still remained aristocratic even though there were now recognized kings. According to Tacitus's observations, two types of leaders were elected for life, the *rex* and the *dux*, with the former elected for life "from among a small group of aristocratic households," and the latter appointed on the basis of military accomplishments to lead the army in times of need (Cunliffe 2001b: 429). Cunliffe observes that "councils of the elite were held regularly" to debate matters of concern to the tribe (429). Todd observes, for his part, that the position of a king was quite different from that of a war-leader; a king could be a war leader, but whereas one could be a king if so chosen from those of noble blood, a war leader also required to demonstrate ability (merit) in the conduct of war and pillage. The Germans we hear most were war leaders, not kings (1992: 32–4).[41]

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[39] The following sources also portray the heroes in Beowulf as aristocratic companions: Chambers (1963); Goldsmith (1970); Lawrence (1963); Kiernan (1981).

[40] It should be noted that individualizing and group-oriented chiefdoms should be viewed as ideal-type concepts intended to draw a clear contrast between two evolutionary trends. In reality, when one calls a particular chiefdom "individualizing" or "group-oriented," one is simply saying that it is closer to that type even though it may have some ingredients belonging to the other type. Individualizing chiefdoms have been identified outside Europe in the Northwest Coast of North America. It has been observed that around 750 AD, chiefdoms emerged in the so-called "Mississippian" area – one controlled by elites whose power depended on access to objects which enhanced their prestige, with craft production centers feeding this "prestige-goods economy" (Bogucki 1999: 305–16). But as far as I know, there is no heroic literature and horse-riding technologies associated with these chiefdoms.

[41] This is how Tacitus saw it in the regions the Romans called "Germania": "They choose their kings for their noble birth, their commanders for their valour. The power even of the kings is not absolute or arbitrary." "On matters of minor importance only the chiefs debate; on major affairs, the whole community" (1987: 107, 110).

Despite increased hierarchization, individual warriors were still able to attract a retinue of followers through sheer personal initiative. The clan chiefs together formed an aristocracy at the top of the social hierarchy. Like the king, the chiefs sought to attract followers and win the loyalty of lesser aristocratic warriors by giving gifts. The formation of voluntary war-bands held together by oaths, camaraderie, and a common self-interest was a common characteristic of these chiefdoms. This was a time when social status and rank were still openly determined by one's heroic deeds and by the number of followers or clients one could afford. Ideally, a good chieftain was generous with expensive gifts of weapons and armor for his men, while a good follower was devoted to his chief.[42] In reality, despite the principle of loyalty and companionship, there was always competition for power, and endless personal rivalries. Everyone was keenly aware of the ranking and status of every member of their war-band. During feasting, a strict protocol was observed in the seating arrangement. The place of highest honor, in the center, was generally occupied by the most illustrious and bravest warrior. The others sat on either side of the highest ranking nobleman in order of diminishing importance. But this ranking was not an unquestioned, rigidified structure in which men lost their individuality and vitality. It was free and open, and therefore prone to constant disruptions and violence. At dinner men were thus inclined to engage in wordy disputes over their accomplishments in battle, which often ended in challenges to single combat, and sometimes in the death of one of the duelists.[43]

City-States: Sumerian versus Greek

Citizen warrior states and republican governments have emerged only out of prior individualizing chiefdoms. Gat makes no distinctions

[42] According to Tacitus: "Both prestige and power depend on being continually attended by a large train of picked young warriors, which is a distinction in peace and a protection in war… On the field of battle it is a disgrace to a chief to be surpassed in courage by his followers, and to the followers not to equal the courage of their chief. And to leave a battle alive after their chief has fallen means lifelong infamy and shame" (1987: 112–113).

[43] Tacitus again: "There are grades of rank even in these retinues, determined at the discretion of the chief whom they follow; and there is great rivalry, both among the followers to obtain the highest place in their leader's estimation and among the chiefs for the honour of having the biggest and most valiant retinue" (1987: 112).

between Sumerian city-states, the city-states of the Classical Greeks, Mesopotamian states in general, and the republican government of the Romans. He recognizes that the Mycenaean world Homer had recalled in the *Iliad* was that of a highly stratified culture that was nevertheless dominated, not by one man, but by the "households of rich local chiefs…with their retainers and clients" (215). He describes Mycenaean culture as heroic, and writes of the tribal lands of northern Europe and the archaic Romans as societies dominated by aristocratic families that claimed heroic descent and competed with each other for dominance. But it is the relationship between the exploiters and the exploited, the elites and the commoners, and the concentration of power per se, that draws Gat's undivided attention.

Different states took somewhat different evolutionary tracks in different ecological niches and social circumstances (232). But for Gat, the structure of chiefdoms and their evolution across the world was essentially a process by which the coercive power of the ruling classes was brought "to a new level to command obedience, to organize society, and to mobilize resources" (234). Gat has a subheading which appropriately reads, "the rise of city-states: from aristocratic warriors to a citizen militia," but here he incorrectly makes no distinction between the Greek *poleis* and other cities around the world (274–289). Cities were first and foremost places around which power was concentrated in response to the imperatives of chiefly warfare. The Greek city-states were no more ruled by popular assemblies than the early Sumerian city-states (301). Empires emerged in Sumer towards the middle of the 3rd millennium, and the independence of the city-states was terminated (310), but the same fate awaited the Greek cities as the Macedonians came to impose their imperial will on them. The Roman republic was merely a means by which powerful patricians "institutionalized their dominion over the rest, while regulating the internal competition between them" (216) – and it was in any case replaced by an "autocratic Principate" (321).

I disagree. Sumer was certainly the "first" culture in the world in which people performing a wide variety of non-agricultural activities came to live in large numbers in a new community called the "city". According to Gwendolyn Leick, "the most remarkable innovation" of Mesopotamia was "urbanism" (2001: xvii). This civilization invented writing, bureaucracy, and mathematics, but these were soon invented elsewhere, by the Egyptians, the Chinese, or the Aztecs. Mesopotamia's true invention was the "idea of the city as a heterogeneous, complex,

messy, constantly but ultimately viable concept for human society" (2001: xviii). Sumerian civilization was unique in that its development was not characterized by the emergence of centralized states exercising control over extensive territories, but by dozens of cities each controlling their own rural and pastoral territory and own irrigation.

Keeping in mind that Gat does not discuss Leick's observation about Sumer, this does not mean that the city-state character of Sumerian civilization should be automatically equated with the presence of a political culture similar to that which prevailed in ancient Greece. Ever since Thorkild Jacobsen came to the conclusion that "prehistoric Mesopotamia was organized politically along democratic lines," the nature of Sumerian government has been a subject of much discussion and comparison with the Greek city-states. Jacobsen observed that the Sumerian government "was handled by a council of elders but ultimate sovereignty resided in a general assembly comprising of…all adult free men of the community" (1943: 159–72). The problem with this argument is that it is based on undocumented assumptions. As Tom Jones has written, the claim that Sumerian city-states were ruled by popular assemblies, "comes from the single example drawn from a ballad and the very large assumption that the Sumerian and derivative Babylonian epics originated as the product of a heroic age in which traditional institutions resembled those of the Greeks and Romans" (1981: xi). I shall argue later that Near Eastern "heroic" epics were very different from Indo-European epics, but for now I want to stress that the *recorded* evidence that we do have, as it emerges from the Early Dynastic period (2900–2700 BC), tells us that the Sumerian city-states were *de facto* ruled by kings. Jacobsen himself has noted elsewhere that in each of the early "historic" city-states "one individual, the ruler, united in his hands the chief political powers: legislative, judiciary, and executive" (in Wittfogel 1957: 267; see also Rhee 1981: 18–19). It was the king alone who could enlarge or diminish a temple's estates, assign persons to prestigious cultic offices and undertake irrigation works. All aspects of life were intertwined, and at the head of the political-religious order stood the king himself, conceived, nourished, and physically fashioned by the gods (Kuhrt 2002a: 34).[44]

[44] Both Frankfort (1956: 77) and Saggs (1989: 34) follow Jacobsen's claim that the early Sumerian cities were primitive democracies. But neither one of them offers any additional sources in support of this conjecture. We need more than Frankfort's assertion that "the early Mesopotamian cities resembled those of Greece."

By contrast, the constitution of the Greeks states was democratic. Now, it is true that, in spite of the constitutional incorporation of all male citizens into the government, most Greek *poleis* remained oligarchic in actuality. Constitutionally, participation in the public assemblies was denied to slaves, resident aliens, and women; and, of the male citizens (roughly one-third of the population) who enjoyed rights of self-government, it was really a small elite of aristocratic families who had the means and connections to regulate the affairs of the state. Nevertheless, particularly in the case of 5th century Athens, the extent to which citizens participated in every decision of the state was remarkable. Every decision had to be approved by a popular assembly; every judicial decision was subject to appeal to a popular court of at least fifty-one citizens, selected from an annual panel of adjudicators who were representative of the Athenian citizenry. Although most of the elected officials, such as the generals and treasurers, were invariably nobles, they were elected by lot and the assembly was free to choose others. Every official was subject to public scrutiny before taking office, and anyone could be called to account and removed from office. There was no standing conscripted army, no police force, and no autocratically accepted way to coerce the citizenry (Thornton 2000).

In the next chapter I will consider briefly how sovereignty in Republican Rome was invested in the aristocratic Senate and in the Tribunes of the people. In the next two sections I will argue that the political structure of the ancient Near East was autocratic, and that there was no room in the states of Mesopotamia for the cultivation of true heroic epics.

The Autocratic Character of Mesopotamia and Egypt

We have seen that warfare was possibly the foremost aggrandizing strategy among chiefdoms. As societies evolved to the level of

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The development of the Greek polis is attested historically, from the original form of the polis as an aristocratic republic dominated by its council of nobles, to the reforms of Solon (639–559 BC) and its expansion of citizenship to include merchants and artisans, to the reforms of Cleisthenes (in 508–507 BC) which vested final authority in an assembly of all adult male Athenian citizens away from Solon's aristocratic council of four hundred. In any case, Frankfort and Saggs agree that by the time of Sargon (2371–2316 BC) the autonomy of the old city-state system had broken down (Frankfort: 88; Saggs: 41). Saggs adds that the Phoenician city-states of the early 1st millennium were not ruled by citizens but by "hereditary and absolute" kings (35).

paramount group-oriented chiefdoms, authority became increasingly concentrated in the hands of one supreme chief from whom wealth and power were seen to flow vertically to the majority at the bottom as well as to the few under the supreme chief. Transegalitarian and simple chief-level societies, however, were more "open" in that big men and chiefs were still obligated to rule with the consent of their kinsmen and the elders of the tribe. Competitive feasting, slave raiding, and warfare with other chiefs still offered ample opportunities for aggrandizing individuals to accumulate wealth and prestige. There were no paramount chiefs maintaining a monopoly over warfare and the distribution of staples, acting as the sole centralizing source of social mobility. As long as there were opportunities for advancement outside the collectivist structures of the state, or independently of the chief's favours, one would expect to find a situation in which status enhancement through the performance of individually-initiated deeds was still a significant factor in social mobility. This is well-illustrated by Junker in her study of warfare in Philippine chiefdoms (1999:336–349). In the smaller chiefdoms of the Philippines, raiding (as opposed to conquests sponsored by paramount chiefs with their armies) remained an alternative source of wealth and status for young male warriors. Ambitious men enjoyed greater opportunities to raise fighting forcers through their kinship networks. One would expect to find in this situation oral epic stories emphasizing the warrior prowess of individuals, as we do in the case of the Philippines.

However, while humans in general are capable of courage and great deed, the opportunity to achieve *individual* renown and prestige are increasingly difficult and rare as the Near Eastern cultures move towards centralized state government.[45] It is only among the

[45] While I will be focusing in what follows on Near Eastern *states*, an argument seeking to show that Indo-European warriors were exceptionally aristocratic requires a detailed comparative study of the class structures, economies, and religious beliefs of other intense warlike chiefdoms and proto-states such as the Aztecs, Zulus, and Mongols. This still remains to be done. For now, let me draw attention to a highly regarded study by Inga Clendinnen entitled *Aztecs* (1993). This book serves well as an argument that may potentially falsify the claims I have made since it portrays Aztec culture as having the following central characteristics: i) it was a society "chronically" committed to war, all young males "were exposed to warrior training," ii) warfare was "intensively competitive and intensely individualistic," iii) success in battle was the way to achieve "prestige, honor, fame;" iv) promotion into noble status, including access to economic comforts and privileges, as well as one's ranking within the nobility, depended on ongoing success in battle (111–22). Clendinnen's account, however, portrays a society with fundamental differences. The whole objective of Aztec battle

individualizing cultures of the West that one finds complex and paramount chiefdoms, as well as in civilized states, true tales of personal heroism. The foundational values and ideals of the West were first recounted in Greek, Danish, Irish, Icelandic, and Germanic heroic poems, sagas, and myths such as the *Iliad*, *Beowulf, Lebor na hUidre*, *Njals Saga*, *Gisla Saga Sursonnar,* and *The Nibelungenlied* (Nilsson 1968; Littleton 1973; Nagy 1999; Gurevich 1995). These were the earliest literary voices from the dawn of Western civilization. Before the Greeks, none of the cultures of the East knew the *written* form of heroic tragedy. Heroism and tragedy require a culture in which some individuals are free to set themselves apart from others. Tragedy is a form of literature that expresses acutely the inescapable sacrifices and limitations entailed in the human effort to achieve greatness. This sense of limitation grows not out of a feeling of enslavement to mysterious forces but out of a realization that individuals who covet immortal fame are fated to engage in hubristic acts which inevitably bring about suffering, disappointment, and early death.

To start, let us make some broad observations about Near Eastern polities. The monumental architecture of the Sumerians, the Ziggurat, was not seen as an example of the power of man to master nature, and neither was it seen as a symbol of human arrogance in the way that Jehovah interpreted the myth of the Tower of Babel; it was seen, rather,

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was the taking of captives for ritual cannibalism; warriors were essentially solitary hunters of other warriors. One's promotion, ranking, and prestige were "measured narrowly by the number and status of enemy warriors taken alive in one-to-one combat." It was an "individualistic" culture in the sense that each warrior was in direct competition with his peers for captives, but the objective of the contest was to incapacitate the mobility of other warriors in order to capture them for consumption. Clendinnen notes that a warrior who acted to assist a companion who was being threatened by an enemy combatant "was liable to be interpreted as an attempt to pirate his captive." All great warriors were under the constant threat of losing their status by becoming victims or captives themselves, whereupon they would be stripped of their regalia, their "scalp lock shorn," their "heart excised," their "emptied bodies broken into their parts, and dispersed to be eaten." Thus, the status of nobility and the warrior's fame were highly precarious; warriors who were unable to maintain their level of performance in the number of captives were in fact stripped of their regalia, and made to endure public humiliation. Finally, Aztec culture did not produce a literature of tragedy and personal heroism (123–145). Clendinnen speaks, to the contrary, of the "anguish of powerless dependence, the constancy of insecurity, the painful insubstantiality of status and reward in the imperial city of Tenochtitlan…" (148–49). The chances of falling victim to a ritual of cannibalism (93–100), or facing public humiliation, were very high for warrior-nobles, leading Clendinnen to note that that the "most insistent Mexican metaphor for man-to-man relations" was "the final irrelevance of human endeavour" (145).

as a symbol of the subservience of man to the gods. The gods, not humans, were credited for the achievements of Sumerian civilization (Muller 1961: 34–77). Nature in Mesopotamia was rather unpredictable in its responses to human effort; natural disasters could strike at any moment, and in this environment the gods turned out to be violent in their punishment, heedless and arbitrary in their will.[46] The object of religion was not spiritual holiness; rather, divination and rituals were performed for the sake of good crops, health, and success in war. The Egyptians seemed to have a more optimistic view of man's capacities, living as they were in a more stable, united, and relatively secured land, further away from intruders and enemies, around a Nile river that never brought drastic floods. But the Kings of Mesopotamia and the Pharaohs of Egypt were the only "free" individuals in these cultures, treating their societies as their royal extensions, empowering their favorite court officials and governors, selecting them and assigning them specific tasks. Not daring, willfulness, and courage, but obedience and loyal subordination were the principal virtues of these states.

There was a large class of "free" men in both ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt, that is, of individuals who were not other men's property or prisoners-of-war. Scholars tend to agree that, despite the increasing number of slaves, most public works in both Mesopotamia and Egypt in the 3rd millennium, including the labor employed in the building of the pyramids, was undertaken by "free" men (Saggs 1989: 43). Yet these "free" men had an obligation for labor services for the state in exchange for rations of food. They were not independent farmers and less so citizens who participated in public assemblies to discuss the affairs of the state. Most of the land was institutionally owned or set aside to provide revenue for the state, religious cults, office-holders, and socially privileged individuals, though wealthy office holders did invest income in the acquisition of large private estates.[47]

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[46] Henri Frankfort (1956: 63) writes "Throughout [Mesopotamia] we meet with the somber conviction than man is impotently exposed to the impact of a turbulent and unpredictable universe. This feeling was rationalized in theology, which taught that man was created especially to serve the convenience of the gods."

[47] I have stated a few times in this book that Greek hoplites, medieval peasants (and we can add Roman legionaries) were independent farmers. I also indicated above that the settlements of individualizing chiefdoms consisted of farmsteads or independent family production units. The exact status of the producers in Indo-European speaking cultures is a topic beyond the scope of this book, but it is worth mentioning here George Dumezil's "tripartition thesis" showing that Indo-Europeans throughout the

In Mesopotamia, during the Agade period (2340–2159 BC), after the various Sumerian cities fell under the control of one central dynasty, we encounter a situation in which the kings were "exalted beyond the human sphere" and, like the gods themselves, were seen as the providers of wealth, status and safety to everyone. They were the redistributors of magnificent presents to temples, their favorites, and members of the royal family – all intended to symbolize their unsurpassed position. The soldiers were not independent men, less so aristocrats, but servants of the king supplied with rations of food, wool, and weapons and, in some instances, plots of land for subsistence (Kurt 2002a: 54–55).

While the Mesopotamian kings were not necessarily tyrants who ruled for their own material benefit, but were responsible for the performance of public works, they alone tended to be seen as individuals with agency, responsible for all the accomplishments of their society, even if it came indirectly through their appointed officials, scribes, and provincial governors. They were providers and protectors, divinely born and appointed only by god. The ceremonial poems portrayed them as the only characters capable of greatness and thus of

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world possessed a remarkably similar social structure in that the priests, warriors, and food-producing classes were all seen as playing a vital part in the total ordering of society. C. Scott Littleton, one of the leading students of Dumezil, sums up this thesis in the following way: "The food producing class, while distinct from that of the warriors, was nevertheless a much more integral part of the total society.…The ancient Indo-European herdsmen and cultivators – and perhaps the artisans as well – would seem to have played a part in the total ritual and social life of their communities undreamed of by the ancestors of the Egyptian *fellahin* and their counterparts in Mesopotamia" (1973: 224). Mallory draws attention to this thesis, and even states that one of the cultural traits "truly unique to the Indo-Europeans" was their "tripartite ideology," both in the way they conceived their social structure and in the way this same tripartite division received "endless elaboration in all spheres of cultural ideology and behavior" (1989: 132–41, 271). But while Mallory is impressed by the way this tripartite ideology finds expression in all the mythologies of Indo-Europeans, he agrees with critics that the division of society proposed by Dumezil is "so natural and generic to any society that it cannot be usefully employed as an ethnic marker of Indo-European culture" (141). Dumezil and his students might have been more persuasive had they considered whether the warrior-aristocracy of Indo-European societies was an unusual class with a strong libertarian spirit rather than a privileged minority in the manner of the "ruling classes" of other stratified societies. Dumezil focused his attention almost entirely on the myths associated with this tripartite division; we also need to investigate further the independent farmsteads and craftsmen of Indo-European speaking cultures, the existence of which has been noted on many occasions (see, for example, Bogucki 1999: 276; Cunliffe 2001) but without a proper comparative perspective, and a careful consideration of the level of political participation of the producers in the community.

individuality. According to Kuhrt, the poems and hymns performed in the courts all contain the same essential elements:

> The king is the perfect soldier and military commander, exceptionally strong and brave and an expert in handling all kinds of weapons. He always leads his troops into battle; the fame of his military triumphs is known throughout the world and inspires terror in his enemies (2002a: 68).
>
> His wisdom and learning are unsurpassed; everyone seeks his advice in the assembly; he speaks all the languages spoken by the subjects of his kingdom without recourse to interpreters. He is the most expert diviner; he also excels in music and knows all the hymns and melodies; "his music making is so delightful that he makes his subjects and the gods exceedingly happy (69).

This political culture prevailed through the entire history of the Near East – or so is the view that comes across in Kuhrt's two volume work, *The Ancient Near East 3000–323 BC*. This work, I should add, is not putting forth a peculiar argument; it is actually a straightforward, non-polemical but "magisterial" expression of a generally accepted view. Except for multicultural historians and academic socialists who sympathize with collectivist states, the consensus is that Near Eastern polities were autocratic in character. I have focused on this work as one of the best consensual expressions of the current state of scholarship. The editorial comments cited in its back cover (penned by highly regarded scholars) speak of the "remarkable" quality of this work; "without equivalent in any language;" "scholarship of the highest order…with massive accompanying bibliography and footnotes…unmatched by anything available." While there were varying details in the political structures of Near Eastern states through the long period examined by Kuhrt, particularly in regards to relations between "secular" and religious orders, the basic principle of governance was autocracy or, as I like to call it, despotism.

There were, of course, in all Near Eastern societies, powerful members of the court, near kinsmen of the king, merchants, and landowners who were prominent by virtue of their position and wealth. The powers of the king were not absolute; kin groups at the local level enjoyed enough leeway to settle their own affairs according to their customs. Logistical difficulties made it impossible for "imperial" rulers to make light of semi-autonomous tribes and powerful chieftains who paid tribute but were always looking for opportunities to freed themselves and extend their own powers.

Every ruler was constrained by traditional norms seen as valid "from time immemorial."

It would also be misleading to view Near Eastern rulers as tyrannical characters lacking in collective regard for their kingdoms. The records show clearly that an important role played by the king was as a source of equity. The celebrated code of Hammurabi (1790 BC) envisions the king not only as the upholder of order, but as the source of justice itself (Saggs: 156–60). The commoners saw their kings as those appointed by their gods to protect them against the abuses of the rich and powerful. Protests against corrupt officials and even strikes against state-work were not uncommon (Saggs: 42–3). Still, it was the king who was the font of justice and rightfulness, and he expected servile-like obedience from his subjects. In the epilogue to the Hammurabi code, the king is spoken of as if he were the only "I":

> I, the king who stands head and shoulders above kings – my words are choice, my diligence is unequalled. At the command of the sungod, the great judge of heaven and earth, may justice become visible in the land (Kuhrt 2002a: 112).

In Egypt, the pharaoh was the incarnation of sacred power; he guaranteed the cosmic order, embodied law and order on earth; "truth," "right behavior," or "correct balance." As maintainer of this balance, he was simultaneously expected to rule in accordance with it. "In relation to his subjects," writes Kuhrt, "the king was omnipotent" (2002a: 147). The whole vast bureaucratic and economic organization of the empire was directed to the glorification of the Pharaoh (Montet 1964: 32–62). All public offices were, in origin, an expansion of the functions of the royal house. While family connections were widely drawn upon to gain access to, and promotion up, the hierarchy of officialdom, there was no entitlement to position based on noble privilege. The members of the nobility were judged according to their performance of public duties to the king and his kingdom. Revealingly enough, Kuhrt writes that "long lineages indicating pride in one's family and noble origins are absent in the tomb inscriptions – instead individual service and the way it has been rewarded by the king are the themes" (153).

"In a civilization which sees the whole universe as a state," writes Jacobsen, "obedience must necessarily stand out as a prime virtue" (1977: 202). He was referring to the political life of Mesopotamia in general. "Unquestioned acceptance" of authority was the "good life." Obedience to one's familial authorities, in a strict hierarchical order,

was the beginning of such a life. Soldiers without a leader, according to a familiar saying, were like "sheep without a shepherd"; peasants without a bailiff were "a field without a plowman." The authorities were always right: "The king's word is right; his utterance, like that of a god, cannot be changed." Success is not a man's doing; "for man," Jacobsen writes, "is weak and has no power to influence the course of the universe to any appreciable degree" (203–4). Man was created to be the servant of the gods, and he can only have a chance of success by serving a god. An obedient servant can expect protection from his master; "to be promoted, to receive favors and rewards from his master." Obedience is the key to success, a healthy life, many sons, and an honored standing in the community.[48]

Wittfogel observes that, while in all cultures there are many gestures by which subordinates show respect, no symbol expresses submission as strikingly as prostration. He notes that prostration is as "characteristic" of Eastern (including American) civilizations as it is "uncharacteristic for the higher agrarian civilizations of classical antiquity and the European Middle Ages" (1957: 152). He also observes that the custom of prostration came to prominence only as chiefdoms (I would say "group-oriented" types) started to approximate a state-centered level of development. In complex chiefdoms, chiefs were held in high esteem but there were still no displays of prostration in the presence of rulers. With the rise of paramount (or proto-state) chiefdoms, as in Hawaiian culture, we would witness commoners crawling "before their rulers" (153). With the onset of "state-centered hydraulic civilizations" prostration would occur "almost everywhere" (153). In Inca Peru, even the highest dignitaries approached the ruler with their backs bent as if they were bringing tribute. In China, kowtowing prevailed throughout its civilized history; in classical Hindu India, submission was expressed by embracing a superior's feet, and the king was approached in an attitude of prayer; in Pharaonic Egypt, loyal subordinates are depicted crawling, and kissing (or sniffing) the monarch's scent; in Mesopotamia, prostration was expected before the gods, the ruler, and high state officials. Among the early followers of Mohammed, prostration

[48] Muller writes: "The ruling principle of obedience in the ancient East could breed the virtues of loyalty and fortitude, the wisdom of patience and resignation, the exaltation of self-surrender; yet it always looks slavish because it was unreasoned obedience, to an arbitrary authority" (1961: 60). I would not use the word "arbitrary"; the authority of the kings was backed up by long held traditions.

was practiced only in prayer but eventually, as the Muslims were "Orientalized," this custom found expression in secular circles as well. The Hellenistic empires of the Seleucids and the Ptolemies also assimilated this gesture as they were "Orientalized".[49]

The Epic of Gilgamesh *is not a Heroic Tragedy*

The aristocracy of the Near Eastern world was not free; sovereignty in these states belonged to either god-kings or kings considered the viceroys of the gods; which is why the *Epic of Gilgamesh* cannot be seen as a tragedy. Yet, in our multicultural universities where "diversity" programs are the order of the day, and superficial variations are celebrated, the current trend among classicists has been to argue that Gilgamesh is an epic with strong similarities to the *Iliad* and to other Western poems such as *Beowulf*.

The debate on the so-called "orientalizing" features of Greek culture defies review in a few paragraphs. Nevertheless, the nuts and bolts of this debate can be adequately grasped by the educated proletarian. The two most impressive works in this debate are Walter Burkert's *The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age* (1992, and M. L. West's *The East Face of Helicon: West Asian Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth* (1997). Martin Bernal

[49] There is a tyrannical-turned-despotic tendency in the aristocratic pursuit of superior greatness. This is how I interpret Alexander the Great's assimilation of Persian kingship customs. There is also, however, a powerful tendency among aristocrats to oppose this despotic tendency and to uphold "republican" values. A stand against prostration and Alexander's "Orientalism" is a recurrent theme in Arrian's, or Lucius Flavius Arrianus's biography, *The Campaigns of Alexander* (1971). Arrian writes critically of how Alexander "came to allow himself to emulate eastern extravagance and splendor, and the fashion of barbaric kings of treating their subjects as inferiors" (213). He reports a speech made by Callisthenes, a pupil of Aristotle, to Alexander and his elite companions, in which he derided the homage of prostration as a "humiliating custom," asking Alexander: "do you really propose to force the Greeks, who love their liberty more than anyone else in the world, to prostrate themselves before you?… [The] Greeks and Macedonians honour you honourably as a man" (221, see also pp. 356–57). The discontent of his elite companions was testimony to their own sense of aristocratic pride as companions of Alexander's army. The Roman historian, Quintus Curtius Rufus, in his biography, *The History of Alexander*, cites Hermolaus's justification as to why he and others had plotted against Alexander: "We plotted to kill you because you have begun to act not as a king with his free-born subjects but as a master with his slaves" (1984: 192). These literary incidents show how difficult it is to impose this humiliating salutation; but they also show why Westerners were so keen to create constitutions that would legally counteract such tyrannical tendencies.

has interpreted Burkert's book as a demonstration that there was "massive" influence on the formation of Greek language, literature and art from the Levant and Mesopotamia (1996). Fernandez-Armesto has written that West's *East Face of Helicon* "settles the controversy about where Greek ideas 'originally' came from" (2007: 189).

First, it should be clarified that Burkert's book is about Near Eastern influence on Greek culture in the early archaic age, which is the period around 750–650. West's book is mostly about Near Eastern influence on Greek literature from Homer to Aeschylus. Neither one of these books can be used to argue that the ancient Greeks were an offshoot of some Near Eastern civilization, or that Greek genius was merely a late and relocated flowering of Egyptian or some other oriental genius. These books cannot be used to detract from the greatness and the uniqueness of the *classical* Greeks. Burkert clearly states that the oriental influences were felt in the "formative epoch" of Greek culture; after 650 BC the Greeks became much more self-conscious of their own identity, and thus less malleable to foreign influences (1992: 8). What these authors show is that the Archaic Greeks borrowed a number of motifs from the cultures around them, or at least shared some common beliefs or practices.

Second, both Burkert and West exaggerate Eastern influences. Ken Dowden, in his review-essay of West's book (2001), raises some discerning objections. He praises the mass of details West accumulates in his comparisons between Eastern and Western literary production, on matters divine and mortal, on typical incidents and structural points (beginnings, messenger scenes, similes and so on), on poetic language and formulae, on myths and legends of heroes, and on epic literature and lyric poets. But he questions "the negative effects of cumulation of dubious similarities;" the "insufficient resemblance" between many claimed parallel motifs; the fact that some resemblances are "attested all over the world" (how meaningfully comparable is it that the phrase to 'roar like a lion' is "found in both Greek and Akkadian epic" (172–73)? Dowden says that the facility with which West makes the case for Hesiod's orientalism (in contrast to the "less convincing" arguments he makes for Aeschylus, for example) "suggests that he is exceptional, that he is a specially orientalizing poet" (174). It is worth citing in full Dowden's main point for its equanimity and balanced judgment:

> [T]he influence of the East should not be overstated and it should not be used as a determinist tool to undervalue the level of culture the Greeks

> 'arrived' with, which they found and shaped in Greece, or developed for themselves. We should beware not only of anti-Eastern prejudice but also of anti-primitive prejudice, undervaluing the achievement of peoples who do not match our idea of urban civilization [Indo-European proto-Greeks]. Added to this, there is the danger of meaningless similarity. To take an example, when we look at paganism we find all sorts of similarities between different pagan systems, but this is meaningless because we are simply observing…non-living faith cultures. They are similar because they are not Christian or Muslim. We do not need to ask who borrowed sacrifice from whom (though we might be interested in the particular manner of sacrifice). So, in the question of poetry, there is much about it that is likely to be uniform between most societies in archaic times. It is clear that the *Indo-European languages reflect a widespread poetic tradition of which Homer is an offshoot*. It is clear that Near Eastern societies likewise displayed such a tradition. We need to hesitate before we privilege Greek-Near Eastern similarities, particularly when we have lost so much of the Indo-European tradition (173).[50]

Third, and this is the point I would like to focus on, I think that Burkert overplays his argument that "the Greek epic of Homeric style may be regarded as a very self-dependent flowering" (2004: 23).[51] This claim is based on some "striking similarities" he has observed between Homer's epics and *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. This claim, which has long been developing, is now commonly accepted. Jasper Griffin, in a long review of Stephen Mitchell's *Gilgamesh: A New English Version*, states that the heroic themes of the *Iliad* were predated by over a thousand years in

[50] In the course of examining this debate I learned recently that West's next major work after *The East Face of Helicon* was actually on the prior influences of Indo-European mythologies, poetries, and religion on Greece, entitled *Indo-European Poetry and Myth* (2007). I have decided to let this book of over 500 pages of specialized scholarship speak for itself in terms of the topics it covers: the status of poets and poetry in Indo-European societies; gods and other supernatural beings; the forms of hymns, prayers, and incantations; conceptions about the world, its origin, mankind, death, and fate; the ideology of fame and of immortalization through poetry; the typology of the king and the hero, the hero as warrior; the war-band, weapons, horses, chariots, and the conventions of battle narrative. This work, which I hope to integrate further in future research, greatly solidifies the arguments I have sought to advance here. West is by no means the first one to have seen intimate connections between Homeric and Indo-European mythologies; this has been the central preoccupation of Dumezil's research, as indicated in an earlier footnote. Julian Baldick (1994) also investigates Homer in light of the mythologies of other Indo-European cultures, Indian, Celtic, Scandinavian, and Roman. Felice Vinci has gone so far as to argue that the events of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* took place in the Baltic and not the Mediterranean (2006).

[51] I am relying on Burkert's *Babylon, Memphis, Persepolis. Eastern Contexts of Greek Culture*, particularly chapter 2, "Orientalizing Features in Homer," for a summation of his main arguments.

"an extraordinary epic poem" known as Gilgamesh (2006). Similarly, N. K. Sanders, in an earlier English translation of this epic, informs us that the king Gilgamesh is "the first tragic hero."[52] I cannot agree with these classicists. Burkert makes the sensible enough point that in both the Homeric poems and *Gilgamesh* we have "epic" narratives which employ long verses repeated indefinitely, dealing with gods, sons of gods, and great men from the past. He notes as well that both employ similar traits of style, standard epithets, formulaic verses, repetition of verses, and typical scenes. Moreover, up to a point, Burkert may be right, at least on the surface, that the central characters in *Gilgamesh* and in Homer's epics are heroic warriors who perform great deeds. But the differences, I would suggest, are far more striking than the resemblances.

To start with, the "hero" Gilgamesh appears, from the very beginning, as a typical Eastern ruler who claims to have achieved all the great things for his society, and that no one else has any achievements to their names. The only other fighting man in this epic is Enkidu, a wild man who lacks nobility. Unlike the *Iliad*, which consists of battle scenes constructed largely out of individual encounters designed to enhance the specific deeds of singular heroes, there are no individuals with identifiable biographies in *Gilgamesh*. The ruler, a king of Uruk or Erech, a city of Mesopotamia, first appears as a despot, in contradistinction to the ideal ruler who should be a Sheppard of the city; and, although it is the case that this was an ideal that motivated Eastern rulers to show concern for righteousness, consider the following acts attributed to Gilgamesh in the opening scenes, which clearly give him a tyrannical touch: "…his lust leaves no virgin to her lover, neither the warrior's daughter nor the wife of the noble.." (1981: 62). As this passage suggests, even the daughters of warriors and the wives of nobles were not safe from the whims and appetites of kings. In stark contrast, Agamemnon, King of Mycenae, appears in the opening pages of the *Iliad* facing the fury and insubordination of his most important vassal, Achilles, with all his followers, for having offended his honor in taking a girl Achilles had earned as a prize from his army.[53] Although Achilles is "the best of the Achaeans," the performer of "the greatest deeds of

[52] I am using the 1981 Penguin Edition of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, translated by N. K. Sanders.

[53] I am using the Oxford edition of *The Iliad*, translated by Robert Fitzgerald, with an Introduction by G.S. Kirk (1984).

martial valor," the *Iliad* devotes long sketches to the personal ancestries of other aristocrats including, for example, Diomedes in Book 5, Patroklus in Book 16, and Menelaus in Book 17.

In Homer's vision of the Mycenaean past, Agamemnon is surrounded by free, prideful men who are always deliberating and debating their actions rather than subserviently following the commands of an autocratic king. The king Agamemnon, writes Nilsson, "was no Pharaoh nor was he a king by divine right like the Hellenistic kings and the late Roman Emperors" (1968: 233). The right to attend the popular assembly was restricted to those who risked their lives in battle. The chiefs were the representatives of their contingents and spoke in their name. Freedom of speech was inherent at the assembly. Most of the *Iliad* consists of speeches by aristocratic warriors arguing over strategies, and debating the king's proposals over the conduct of the war. The *Iliad* is abundant in the creation of "some two dozen finely individualized major characters" in addition to numerous minor figures. No single autocrat made all the decisions and boasted about his deeds without challengers.[54]

Now, to be sure, the relation of the *Iliad* to historical reality has long been a matter of scholarly interest. A few scholars have claimed that what Homer really mirrors is his own contemporary world of the 8th century, while others have argued that his epics call back the world of "Dark Age" Greece around 1050–900 BC. The stronger consensus, as I understand it, is that Homer's poems reflect the central cultural values of the Mycenaean Age of about 1400–1100 BC. There are a variety of elements in his epics representing different periods regarding the types of weapons, shields, and metals mentioned in the poems. But the social structures and values are still drawn primarily from the world of late aristocratic Mycenae (Taplin 1986: 72–75; Luce 1975: 69–72; Chadwick 2005: 180–6). I made reference earlier to Hanson's view that Mycenaean

[54] Actually, as West observes in his study of *Indo-European Poetry and Myth*: "A king may himself be a hero, but in most cases the roles are distinct. The outstanding hero – one may think of Achilles, Hector, Jason, Heracles, Arjuna, Beowulf, Cu Chulainn, Lancelot – is usually not identified with the king. The king is remembered for kingly virtues such as justice, prosperity, liberality or his lack of them" (2007: 411). West says that a hero in Indo-European poetry was "generally a man of supreme physical strength and endurance allied to moral qualities such as fearlessness, determination, and a propensity for plunging into dangerous and daunting enterprises" (411).

rule was largely similar to that of Asian "palace monarchies." Oswyn Murray thinks that Mycenaean states were rather similar to the "oriental despotisms" of Mesopotamia and Egypt (1980: 18). He may be correct that the warrior people who founded Mycenae came to be influenced by the centralized palace economies of the Near East. I tend to favor the view that the political structure of the Greek mainland during the 2nd millennium was one of autonomous "feudal" warlords surrounded by aristocratic retainers under the nominal overlordship of Mycenae. The king was the overlord or the w*anax* of other lords. Mycenaean records do refer to a class called *hepetai* or "followers" who formed the court circle but these were also identified as the "companions" of the king. There are references as well to warriors called *telestai*, or men of *telos*, who were similarly wealthy aristocrats, masters of parcels of land which they had obtained in return for military undertakings with the king (Luce: 79–80; Robinson 1983: 12–18; Chadwick: 72; Arnheim 1977: 15–17).

With the collapse of Mycenaean culture around 1100 BC, and the destruction of Mycenae and the administrators who managed the centralizing palaces of the overlord, the distinction between the overlord and the vassal noble chieftains disappeared, and instead of a political order centered around an overlord-monarch, one finds in Greece many decentralized petty chiefdoms (Ehrenberg 1964: 17-20; Arnheim: 38–39). This may explain why in Homer's poems – to the degree that they partly reflect the preceding Dark Age – the king Agamemnon is portrayed as having very limited powers. Be that as it may, in Homer's time, which is known as the Archaic Age (roughly between 800 and 500 BC) aristocrats expected kings to consult a council consisting of the heads of the noble families. "Debate within the council or before the people was the basis of decision-making" (Oswyn: 58).

Space precludes going over all the "parallels" and "similarities in the epics that I have referred to here. I would insist that the crucial difference comes down to the absence of personal tragedy in *Gilgamesh*. I do not believe we can talk of heroism and tragedy when there is only one ruler with the chance to claim fame without peers to challenge him, question his deeds, and put him to the test. Burkert equates Gilgamesh's longing for immortality with the Homeric heroes' longing for "imperishable glory" (2004: 27). It is true that Gilgamesh longs for eternity, and on his journey, at the last moment, he finds a secret herb that promises the gift of eternal youth; but then a snake, a reptile, takes the

herb as he is asleep, and so he fails to achieve eternity. The suggestion seems to be that even the king's destiny is ultimately decided by arbitrary forces or accidental events. Where is the heroism in a situation in which a snake decides the outcome? The message that death is the lot of mankind is decided by a snake. Moreover, while Gilgamesh is a hero who "wishes to make for himself a name" and in his journey defeats the giant monster Humbaba, it is noteworthy that what he yearns for is everlasting life, weeping bitterly when the snake steals the herb; which is, again, in direct contrast to the pursuit of personal immortality by Homer's Mycenaean warriors, who sought above all else, above comfort and life, to be renowned for glorious deeds. Indeed, whereas Gilgamesh yearned for everlasting life, the Greek heroes consciously rejected a long life without memorable deeds for a short life with immortal deeds. The contrast could not be greater.[55]

Sandars defines the tragic in *Gilgamesh* as "the conflict between the desires of the god and the destiny of man" (1981: 21). Griffin concludes with these words of "wisdom": "the highest nobility and the deepest truth are inseparable, in the end, from failure – however heroic – from defeat, and from death" (2006). Griffin would have us believe that *Gilgamesh* and the *Iliad* are in the end inseparable. There is a tragic element in both: no matter what their heroes accomplish, the same end awaits them, namely defeat and death. Burkert thinks that the main message of both epics is the ethos of the mortality of humans in contrast to the enduring life of gods (2004: 26). Again, I disagree. The gods of Mesopotamia were mysterious forces in the sight of which men felt fear and trepidation; they were gods lacking human traits yet in control of human destiny, responsible for the precariousness of life, military defeats, epidemics, floods and droughts (Muller 1961).[56]

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[55] Although Samuel Kramer tries as best as possible to mirror Gilgamesh as the "first heroic epic", he acknowledges that in comparison to the "written epics of the three Indo-European Heroic Ages" (the Greek, Indian, and Teutonic) "there is little characterization and psychological penetration in the Sumerian material. The heroes tend to be broad types, more or less undifferentiated, rather than highly personalized individuals" (1959: 203).

[56] There is of course more to the cosmogony and cosmology of Mesopotamia; nevertheless, this is what Trigger concludes after carefully comparing the religions of the early civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia, Shang China, the Aztecs, the Classic Maya, and the Inca: "People in all early civilizations appeared to have doubted the ability or willingness of supernatural powers to maintain the cosmos or to treat human beings in a consistently friendly manner. They were aware of the potentially devastating effects of political and ecological breakdown and of ecological disasters

This was not so with the Greeks and their gods. Their gods were human-like in their desires and looks, lacking in terror and mystery; and, for all the tragic fate that awaited Achilles and the many other heroes, it was not a fate brought on by snakes stealing herbs, but a self-chosen fate by proud men who knew that men who yearn for greatness will be invaded by passions which appear as impersonal forces, sometimes as gods, which take over the individual in directions beyond their control. Yes, there is a common theme or atmosphere of fatalism and gloom in the *Iliad*, a keen awareness that those who strive for achievement in war pursue a course whose characteristic end is a "short-lived" life. But there is also a spirit of overweening confidence in man's capacity to strive, in the midst of moments of fear and doubt, against the most difficult obstacles.

Griffin writes that "there is no happy ending" in *Gilgamesh* just as in the *Iliad* (the *Song of Roland* and other heroic sagas of the West). I would say that the ending of *Gilgamesh* seems to be that the ways of men are unchangeable, and that it is not for men to ever comprehend the ultimate meaning of life, the unfathomable ways of the gods; all humans, "the master and the servant," are the same before the destinies decided by mysterious gods. This same Sumerian outlook remains in all the other versions of *Gilgamesh* from Babylonian to Assyrian times. In contrast, in the *Iliad*, as Katherine King writes, "it is only because death in its myriad forms is inescapable that it behooves a man to attempt to win honor, to win the right to have the tangible good things of life – ranking place, rich meat, choice wine, and a good farmland – and to be looked upon to as the good one cannot be" (1987: 5–7). Humans are mortal; they are not gods, but they can win honor, a good farmland for their families and a good name, which lives on after their death.

Greek heroes sometimes asked for visible signs of divine support; signs which cannot be willed by human effort to show up at the desired time, but which might nevertheless happen by a happy coincidence. In the *Iliad* there are gods behind every event, what happens between humans down on earth appears to be planned and brought forth by gods located on a higher, exalted level. But when the gods present themselves to the aristocrats to deliver their wishes, they do so in a way

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and generally attributed these failures to interventions by supernatural beings" (2003: 471).

that does not reduce them to a state of fright and feebleness. The gods speak as if they were speaking to peers, "with chivalrous courtesy," offering their advice, telling them it is better to follow the gods, if they wish, while the heroes communicate and react to the gods without losing their freedom and honor.[57]

[57] I am drawing on the illuminating insights of Snell (1960: 23–42). He says that the Olympian gods who rule in the Homeric poems…presuppose a transformation so radical in spirit that we find it hard to understand how a faith can be so completely devoid of terror and mystery." Greek faith carries "the grateful stamp of an aristocratic society" (23, 32). We have a fascinating interpretation of the gods and myths of the Norsemen by H. R. Ellis Davidson: "The gods are heroic figures, men writ large, who led dangerous, individualistic lives, yet at the same time were part of a closely-knit small group, with a firm sense of values and certain intense loyalties…Men knew that the gods whom they served could not give them freedom from danger and calamity, and they did not demand that they should. We find in the myths no sense of bitterness at the harshness and unfairness of life, but rather a spirit of heroic resignation: humanity is born to trouble but courage, adventure, and the wonders of life are matters of thankfulness, to be enjoyed while life is still granted to us. The great gifts of the gods were readiness to face the world as it was, the luck that sustains men in tight places, and the opportunity to win that glory which alone can outlive death" (1964: 218).

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE EMERGENCE OF THE SELF FROM THE WESTERN 'STATE OF NATURE' AND THE CONCILIATION OF CHRISTIANITY AND ARISTOCRATIC LIBERTY

> All things that live for a long time gradually become so saturated with reason that their origin in nonreason thereby comes to be seemed improbable. Nietzsche, *Daybreak*

> [T]he Greek knows the artist only in personal struggle…What, for example, is of particular importance in Plato's dialogues is mostly the result of a contest with the art of orators, the sophists, the dramatists of his time, invented for the purpose of his finally being able to say: 'Look: I, too, can do what my great rivals can do; yes, I can do it better than them. No Protagoras has written myths as beautiful as mine. No dramatist has written such a lively and fascinating whole as the Symposium, no orator has composed such speeches as I present in the Gorgias – and now I reject all of that and condemn all imitative art! Only competition made me a poet, sophist and orator!' Nietzsche, *Homer on Competition*.

Fukuyama and the Megalothymia of the "first men" of the West

In previous chapters I challenged the idea that human beings are generally reactive creatures concerned primarily with their nutrition, reproduction, and adaptation. I agreed with Hayden, Bogucki and Snooks that ambitious aggrandizers were the activators of social change, the initiators of social inequality and the creators of chiefdoms and states. What I suggested as well, however, is that the self-interested behavior of aggrandizers does not explain the uniquely human desire for prestige or recognition. A book that attends to the importance of this desire is Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992). This book is best known for its use of Hegel's philosophy of history as interpreted by Kojeve. What most impressed me about this book when I first encountered it as a graduate student in the 1990s was Fukuyama's ability to bring to light a rich tradition of Western thinkers who held that the desire for survival and for material things is often bound up with the psychological desire to be recognized by others. Some ten years later, after using the book as required reading for a

course, I realized that its most important insight had less to do with the Hegelian thesis on the "end of history" than with the Nietzschean argument that the act of demanding recognition and achieving self-worth may be *inherently aristocratic and inegalitarian* insofar as this demand is driven by a high emotional desire to be recognized as a superior rather than as an equal. Nietzsche's work, in Fukuyama's words, "is a celebration of Hegel's aristocratic master and his struggle to the death for pure prestige" (189).

Yet it also became clearer to me later that there was a limit to the way Fukuyama brought Nietzsche into the discussion, mostly in his typical role as opponent of modern liberalism. He did not articulate Nietzsche's notion of mastery – as embodied in the will to power – to illuminate Hegel's master nor did he follow through the *possibility* of re-reading Kojeve's reading of Hegel in light of Nietzsche's *celebration* of the master. Instead, Fukuyama adopts the commonly held perspective on the historical role of the master as a man who reaches a historical impasse once the relationship between lordship and bondage is established.

I realized one could use Nietzsche's insights as a way to understand the aristocratic spirit of the West from *the very beginning* before the "citizen" starts to triumph over and assimilate the master. But let us accept Fukuyama's important contribution, and then ask the following: if the demand for recognition is inherently inegalitarian, may it not also be the case that this desire has been unevenly manifested by the cultures of the world? Is it possible to argue with Nietzsche that not all cultures are equally proficient in the production of creative individuals? Can we not add to Nietzsche that the West produced the "highest exemplars" of humanity due to its singular aristocratic grounding? We saw in the last chapter that the "megalomaniacal desire" on the part of the chiefs is having others recognize their superiority. Fukuyama develops this point further by considering Plato's famous discussion on the "three parts of the soul" (162–65). Plato believed that all humans had a soul which consisted of three elements: i) a physically desiring part that drives humans "to seek things outside them;" ii) a reasoning part that allows humans to calculate the best way to get the things they desire; and, iii) a "spirited" or *thymotic* part that drives humans to seek recognition from others. Fukuyama adds, using the language of popular psychology, that the desiring part of the soul, called *thymos*, comes from the innate sense in all individuals that they are worthy of some respect. This sense of self-worth and self-esteem is intimately related to the way other humans treat us and evaluate us. But the *thymotic* spirit

is not developed equally in everyone's soul; some individuals are not satisfied with themselves as having equal worth to others in that they want to be recognized as superior. This desire to be superior stems from its ancient Greek roots and is known as *megalothymia* while the desire to be recognized as the equal of others is known as *isothymia*.

Megalothymia is manifested in Hegel's first battle for pure prestige. Fukuyama claims that this battle is Hegel's way of thinking of the beginning of history in philosophical terms, as a stage in which we find a "first man" as he existed prior to the creation of civilized society, a primordial being who has basic biological desires for nourishment, shelter, and the preservation of life, but who also has a thymotic desire to be recognized by other men. Fukuyama correctly interprets this "first man" as nobler than the first man we find in the "state of nature" of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, for he is a prideful and virtuous man who wants something more than his own material well-being.[1] He is willing to risk his life just so to be known as better. The man who is willing to negate his desire for life for the sake of a recognition that is totally non-material demonstrates his humanity in his capacity to act against his strongest animal instincts.

Now, while Fukuyama correctly explains that *megalothymia* is a rare psychological drive exhibited by strong and ambitious men, I believe he loses sight of the *historical* implications of the "first man" when he brings up various historical and cultural examples like Beethoven, Stalin, and Caesar while forgetting to specify or locate the "first man" at the *beginning* of history. Who was this first man engaged in a battle to the death for pure prestige? Yet, to his credit, there is a paragraph in Fukuyama which is worth citing at length because it serves as one of the few instances in which a scholar has tried to make historical sense of Hegel's "first man" in the same way that countless scholars have occupied themselves with historical descriptions of Hobbes's hypothetical state of nature:

> The Hegelian understanding of early class stratification is probably more accurate than that of Marx. Many traditional aristocratic societies initially arose out of the 'warrior ethos' of nomadic tribes who conquered

[1] In chapter six we saw that most Hegel scholars believe that this battle has no historical reference. Loewenberg, however, has interpreted Hegel's "first" battle as analogous to Hobbes's "state of nature," as a war of all against all (1965: 85–86). As I argue later, it makes more sense to think of Hegel's fight as a state of nature dominated by feuding aristocratic war-bands seeking prestige.

> more sedentary peoples through superior ruthlessness, cruelty, and bravery. After the initial conquest, the masters in subsequent generations settled down on estates and assumed an economic relationship as landlords exacting taxes or tribute from the vast mass of peasant 'slaves' over whom they ruled. But the warrior ethos – the sense of innate superiority based on the willingness to risk death – remained the essential core of the culture of aristocratic societies the world over, long after years of peace and leisure allowed these same aristocrats to degenerate into pampered and effeminate courtiers (148).

This is the one instance in which Fukuyama equates the first men with aristocratic societies in history. But this is all we get; the historical contribution of aristocratic warriors is seemingly quick and short. After risking their lives and showing their martial superiority over the ordinary men – over the majority of men preoccupied with their self-preservation and comfort – the aristocrats go on to live a parasitic life extracting surpluses from the real producers to eventually "degenerate into pampered and effeminate courtiers."[2] Fukuyama interprets the master-slave dialectic in the same way other scholars have, including, I would argue, Hegel and Kojeve. The "first man" provokes a bloody battle which gives him satisfaction because he has risked his life and received recognition from another human, but soon the master feels that the recognition he receives from the inferior slave is no longer satisfying. As the master has a slave working for him, "his life therefore becomes a static and unchanging one of leisure and consumption." The slave, on the other hand, rediscovers his humanity through work, which he performs out of a sense of duty and self-discipline; he uses tools, invents technology and advances scientific knowledge and, in this way, he masters nature, learns to control his immediate desires for the sake of future achievement. All this makes the slave proud and gives him a sense of his own self-worth and dignity. Eventually he conceives of the idea of freedom and, in the end, risks his own life for the realization of freedom and universal human equality (192–98).

Fukuyama does not think through the implications of the just-cited passage, namely that the willingness to risk death for the sake of validation was *the* defining attribute of aristocratic societies. Instead, he follows the Hegel-Kojeve supposition that the successful master was a singular man who risked his life and became the sole ruler over a

[2] He is referring to the nobility of 18th century-France when it had become a parasitic hanger-on living off the monarchy; courtiers dedicated to flattery.

servile population. He presumes that, since *megalothymia* is a will to superiority, the master will want to suppress everyone as a way of achieving the highest recognition. The "logic of recognition," he writes, leads "ultimately" to the desire to be a tyrant with no rivals. It is no surprise then that many of the historical examples Fukuyama offers of rulers with powerful *thymotic* drives are of men like Stalin, Mao, and Saddam Hussein, all of whom fit with the philosophical model of the single master who eliminates all competitors. This is a profound misunderstanding of what it means to be an *aristocratic* master. *What aristocrats desire is recognition of their worth and dignity by other masters possessing equal worth and dignity*. There is a momentum in the drive for recognition pushing aristocrats to impose their will on other men including aristocrats. But in true aristocratic societies "some men are free" and this means that the dominant master is always "first among equals." The master-leader finds satisfaction in the recognition he receives from his peers. Despots, on the other hand, find satisfaction in the adulation of servile masses; they fear the competition of free spirits.

Why Hegel's "Master" Must be Aristocratic

I draw on Montesquieu's (1990: 151–52) insight that "there is no point in looking for magnanimity in despotic states, for the ruler cannot display a greatness he does not himself possess. Glory is here absent." A despotic ruler "is usually dominated by anger or revenge… he cannot possess any notion of true glory." Fukuyama is correct in mentioning Stalin and Mao as examples of men with a terrible thirst for power. But he confounds matters in referring to these individuals in the context of a discussion on the warrior ethos of aristocratic cultures. Consider Stalin; the manner in which he acquired his absolute dominion was hardly aristocratic, and the regime he consolidated was utterly despotic. Stalin was extremely self-conscious of the subordinate role he played in the Bolshevik party before 1917. He resented Trotsky's intellectual achievements as well as his command of the Red Army during the Civil War. There is Bukharin's tell-tale observation in 1928 that Stalin "was eaten up" by the desire to be recognized as a reputable theoretician.[3]

[3] As late as the mid-1920s, after Lenin's death, Stalin was still *not* seen, intellectually speaking, as a match for party members like Kamenev, Preobrazhenskii, Piatakov,

His hunger for flattery and his insecurity were based, in Bukharin's words, in his inability "to convince everyone, himself included, that he is greater than everyone" (Tucker 1973: 424–5). But the point is not that Stalin lacked exceptional talents. As Simon Sebag Montefiore's (2008) recent biographical research has revealed, Stalin was extraordinary in many ways; a highly skilled and tenacious guerilla fighter, bank-robber and organizer in the pre-revolutionary period; and during his numerous exiles he acquired patience, fortitude, ingenuity and circumspection. He was a very good judge of character, and could be very amiable and attractive; he knew several languages, and read voraciously in many subjects; and he did ultimately outwit Trotsky in the struggle for power.

The point is that he came from a political despotic atmosphere, an Asiatic/Georgian background outside the Western sphere, combined with a rigid Marxist ideology that despised liberalism. Stalin was the prototypical despot personality. He was a vindictive person who cherished more than anything taking secretive revenge against his enemies. As he once declared: "My greatest pleasure is to choose one's victim, prepare one's plans minutely, satisfy an implacable vengeance, and then go to bed. There's nothing sweeter in the world" (in Montefiore: 309). Unlike aristocrats who relish the company of similarly capable men, Stalin disliked talented men and got rid of anyone who had achieved any sort of prominence or was suspected of having a keener mind. Once in total command of the Communist Party, there were no aristocratic men around him; all his closest advisors were slavish characters, including Molotov, whose wife was arrested and sent to exile, and Kaganovich, whose two brothers were executed, and – yet both continued to collaborate with Stalin. His use of intrigue and deception were critical mainstays of his power. Having defeated all rivals and obtained total power, he still needed to hear choruses of public approval to reinforce his ego (Bazhanov 1982; Ulam 1982).

Let us rehearse Fukuyama's positive contribution thus far: *isothymia* is a desire found in all humans to be recognized as the equal to others; *megalothymia* is a rare disposition exhibited only by a *few* men. *Only* aristocratic societies have exhibited – as an "essential core" of their culture – a "warrior ethos [in] the sense of innate superiority based on

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Smirnov, Smilga, and Radek – known Marxist theoreticians, talented economists, and gifted public speakers. See Cohen's excellent biography, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution* (1980).

the willingness to risk death." The problem is that Fukuyama confuses matters by declaring that aristocratic societies were to be found "the world over." If Hayden confuses matters by not drawing a distinction between the material pursuit of wealth and the immaterial pursuit of status, Fukuyama abandons his insight into the aristocratic nature of masters by following, without further reflection, the Hegelian-Kojevian idea that the "first men" were *men in general*, and assuming that one finds the desire for *pure* prestige in great individuals across the continents of the world. This is an interpretation with textual support in Hegel and Kojeve, but if we are to make historical sense of the philosophical implications of the first battle we need to envision an aristocratic society at the beginning of history.

I believe there is a major flaw in Kojeve's philosophical account (which has not been noted by his interpreters since his readers are philosophers rather than historians), namely that the master-slave dialectic misses the essential historical role of aristocratic warriors. The image we get from Kojeve is that of a singular master – a despot – who, upon winning the "first" battle, faces servile men who are unwilling to challenge his authority because they prefer security rather than a life of risk and rebellious behavior. But true warrior societies are those led by the best fighting men, all of whom recognize each other as masters. In warrior aristocratic societies there are always masters who recognize the heroic deeds of each other. Only in a despotic society where "one man is free" does the master find himself in a situation in which the recognition of the others as slaves is without value for him. Kojeve fails to see that true warrior societies are not those in which one man is free and the rest of the population is servile; they are those in which there is a class of men-at-arms who recognize the humanity of each other even when there is a recognized leader, "the bravest hero" who takes the "hero's portion" of meat when all the mightiest warriors dine together sitting in a circle.[4] A master without honor is without worth, and honor can only be conferred by one's peers.

[4] The following description of a feast among free Celtic aristocratic warriors was made by the Roman writer Athenaeus: "When several dine together, they sit in a circle; but the mightiest among them, distinguished above the others for skill in war or family connections, or wealth, sits in the middle like a chorus-leader. Beside him is the host and next on either side the others according to their respective ranks. Men-at-arms, carrying oblong shields stand behind then while their bodyguards seated in a circle directly opposite share in the feast like their master." Cunliffe (2001a: 361–363), from whom this passage is taken, adds that "the feast was the occasion when rank was proclaimed and accepted. One of the procedures for doing this was the serving of the

Kojeve, I must say, was *not* particularly interested in the masters even though he grasped this part of Hegel's *Phenomenology* better than any interpreter at the time. What mattered to Kojeve, as a Marxist, was the future dialectic of the master-slave relation.[5] He believed that once the master had played the role of risking his life in bloody wars for prestige, there was little else for him to do. He was stuck in the "wrong track" of history, in a situation in which he was recognized by a "thing" and not another man. For all the wars of prestige, the master would find himself in an "existential impasse": either in a life of pleasure and idleness, by living from the fruits of the slaves, or simply dead in battle. His role in history did not go beyond the initial achievement of self-consciousness, with no other lasting legacy. Meanwhile, the slave would be one "ready for change." The "very being" of the slave was indeed transformation because he necessarily works upon nature and learns about nature and becomes "master" of nature; he "transcends himself by working…he educates himself, he 'cultivates' and 'sublimates' his instincts," as he represses his immediate desires and concentrates on his work. The slave, in this way, learns to master his own immediate biological desires in the name of creating products which objectively give expression to his goals. He realizes his essential powers through work and through the products he makes and thus ceases to be a "natural being" and "becomes truly conscious" of his humanity (Kojeve: 20–30, 42–52).

Thus, in Kojeve's view, whereas the master "cannot go beyond himself, change, progress," the slave makes history "in the technical world transformed by his work." In repressing his immediate urge to consume,

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hero's portion." He cites another observation by the Roman Strabo: "And in former times, when the hindquarters [of the roasted animal] were served up, the bravest hero took the thigh piece, and if another man claimed it they stood up and fought in *a single battle to the death*." Cunliffe speaks further of the Celts who spread throughout Europe during 450–200BC, as societies dominated by "free" "aristocratic warriors," characterized by "restless exuberance" and a by a "social system based on warrior prowess."

[5] Kojeve was a peculiar Marxist, a profound one; generally ignored by the New Left, which much preferred the Hegelianism of Georg Lukacs with its grand vision of a universal proletariat liberating the human race. Kojeve's insight comes from his reading of Hegel; what makes him a Marxist is that he saw the *Phenomenology* as a reflection on the progression of consciousness as it was carried forward by actual changes in history; as humans transformed their world, they came to develop new ways of interpreting the world around them. The dialectic of consciousness, therefore, cannot be seen in purely conceptual terms; the philosophers who engendered new ways of thinking did so in the context of changing social realities. This is a point I have not dwelt upon, but it is one which makes Hegel a realist.

and forming an idea of what he intends to make – "the idea that engenders a technique is a scientific idea" – the slave (as he is gradually becoming a bourgeois) engenders "abstract thought, science, technique, the arts – all these have their origin in the forced work of the slave." Therefore, through his work, the slave manages to free himself from the natural conditions of his existence, and learns to master nature and improve the economic conditions of life.[6] As he becomes aware of his intellectual abilities, the slave "becomes conscious of his freedom," and thus conceives "the idea of freedom," an idea that he will eventually realize through the active abolition of slavery. The master, meanwhile is what he is, free in his idleness, the master of a being who gives him a recognition he does not value, and beyond this state the master cannot advance, and so "the master never succeeds in going beyond the freedom that is realized in himself and the insufficiency of that freedom" (Kojeve: 53–70).

It is work that brings real change, not military action; "work that produces a machine gun, and no longer an ax." The purely warlike attitude of the master does not vary throughout the centuries, and therefore it cannot engender a historical change." Work transforms the world and Man himself, by creating a Man that knows how to modify nature and that becomes aware of his freedom. The master starts history by forcing the slave to work, but it is the slave that pushes history forward after its start. Before realizing "human" freedom, the slave thinks through a series of philosophies of freedom…until he conceives Christianity imagining a "beyond" in which the slave is equal to the master, but as long as the slave is not willing to risk his life he will not cease to be a slave. He has to risk his life in a fight with the master, and this he will do once he transcends Christianity by realizing the Christian ideal in the actual world, which is what "is effected in and by the French Revolution" (Kojeve: 53–70).

In writing about ancient Greece, Kojeve momentarily speaks of the "master*s* as citizens" and of a "State of Master*s*," as if aware that in this society there was not a singular master, but a state controlled by a popular assembly of citizens who were all masters (57). Clearly, these

[6] Kojeve uses the word "work" in a broad Hegelian sense as referring to any activity that transforms nature including science and the work of the bourgeoisie. Kojeve does not accept the narrow scope of Marx's labor theory of value with its singular focus on the labor of the proletariat and its inability to make a distinction between the value of unskilled and skilled labor.

"masters as citizens" can be said to have been "truly satisfied" insofar as each was recognized by their peers. But because Kojeve frames the master-slave relationship in Marxist terms, and thus presumes that human work is the main transformative force in history, he gives no attention to the masters beyond the primordial manner in which they brought forth the essential reality of human self-consciousness. Moreover, his argument is presented in purely philosophical terms with no awareness of how particular historical beings might have achieved their self-consciousness. It seems to me that the Hegel-Kojeve idea on the origins of self-consciousness can be of value historically so long as there was a "first" society of masters dedicated to the enhancement of prestige, as the essential way by which its members asserted their "being-for-self" (freedom) and revealed their humanity. I have already argued in previous chapters that the candidates in world history that come closest to playing this role are the Indo-Europeans.

Kojeve and the "first appearance" of Self-Consciousness

What exactly does Kojeve mean when he writes that the "first appearance" of self-consciousness occurs "as Fight to the death for Recognition" (225)? One meaning seems to be that this is the first instance in which man "Negates" what is given to him by Nature. It is the first instance in which Man expresses his freedom by acting according to his own goals instead of reacting instinctively to his appetites and economic desires. He is self-conscious to the extent that he is the agent of his actions:

> Man realizes (= creates) and 'manifests' his humanity (= freedom) by risking his life, or at least being able and willing to risk it, solely 'for glory' or for the sake of his 'vanity' alone (which by this risk, ceases to be 'vain' or 'nonexistent' and becomes the specifically human value of honor, fully as real as animal 'values' but essentially different from them (226).

Let us recall that the discussion of the master-slave dialectic emerges after a preceding dialectic involving consciousness in its relationship to the external world. The first three chapters of Part I of the *Phenomenology* ("Sense-Certainty," "Perception," "Force and Understanding") deal with the experience of consciousness in its relationship with the external world. At this stage, the consciousness of the subject is the consciousness of something that is external. But chapter four of Part I, "The Truth of Self-Certainty," deals with a living subjective mind "of flesh and blood," with bodily appetites (Kojeve: 34). Desire (initially

in its less human form as an appetite for objects, and then in its uniquely human form as an immaterial desire for recognition) is the primordial basis of human self-consciousness.

It is only when the self is no longer conditioned by some independent object, but is driven by a desire to assert itself against another self, that it escapes the demands of the object and presents itself as a "being-for-self."

The attitude of the individual who risks his life for prestige is that of "being-for-self" or self-assertiveness. The historical reference for this attitude could only have been a society made up of aristocrats who were in a state of free willfulness wherein it was possible for individuals to distinguish themselves with their own deeds. Those who were born into the nobility may thus be said to have been born with an attitude of self-assertiveness. Their free status as nobles was tried and made worthwhile through the pursuit of honorable activities. To speak of the ability to risk one's life and demonstrate the veracity of one's nobility, and thereby confirm the essential nature of Man to be self-consciousness, is necessarily to speak of the possibility of being able to stake one's life for recognition. Aristocrats were thus the historical agents in whom "self-consciousness" was able for the "first" time "to make its appearance" (Hegel 1977: par 167).

The two combatants who fight to the death have an attitude of treating the other as wholly subject to their will, or to their desire for superior validation. Hegel writes,

> Self-consciousness is, to begin with, simple being-for-self, self-equal through the exclusion from itself of everything else. For it, its essence and absolute object is 'I'…What is the 'other' for it is an unessential, negatively characterized object. But the 'other' is also a self-consciousness; one individual is confronted by another individual. Appearing thus immediately on the scene, they are for one another like ordinary objects (1977: par 186).

Each combatant is possessed by a desire to acquire an uncommon character, a set of features and a mode of life that will set him apart from the rest. Both see the other as a means to that end; neither one is interested in mutual recognition. For this reason, according to Hegel, as long as there is an attitude of pure self-assertiveness, the development of self-consciousness will remain limited; human selfhood will not develop beyond mere capriciousness, flightiness, and obstinacy. The aristocratic self will remain submerged in the state of nature, within a social arrangement permeated by constant and harsh conflicts (par 187).

This encounter is just the beginning of Hegel's dialectic of freedom. Next is the relation between master and slave wherein one of the parties has accepted a position of subordination and an attitude of "being-for-another" or deference. This slavish character, which in the course of history refers roughly to anyone who has to work (peasant, craftsman) eventually develops a "reasonable" attitude of "being-for-self," or of regarding things as quite subject to his will. Unlike the whimsical master who becomes habituated to a life of luxury, the slave learns to discipline his will, as well as to earn a livelihood peacefully by creating things. It is the slave, then, who makes history, advances the productive forces, and improves his status until he becomes a free bourgeois in a modern community. Hegel describes the psychological attitude of individuals in this community as involving a synthesis of "being-for-self" and "being-for another" in that individuals are now capable of disciplining their wills in state of mutual recognition, acknowledging the needs and rights of others as they go about pursuing their own goals. A society of shared and acknowledged (liberal-democratic) values is a required condition for the full development of the self, or for the psychological wholeness and harmony of humans (Foster 1998: 252–55).[7]

Hegel thus emphasizes the necessity of enslavement and serfdom in history for its role in disciplining individual assertiveness in order to make humans capable of "reasonable" behavior and mutual recognition. Hegel sums up the purpose of this enslavement rather markedly:

> Without having experienced this disciplining which breaks willfulness, no one…becomes reasonable…For that reason all peoples in order to become free…have to had first to go through the strict discipline of subjection to a lord…Bondage and tyranny are therefore a necessary step in the history of peoples and therefore something relatively justified (in Foster: 254).

Yet, Hegel knows that only the European continent saw the development of freedom. There is a major missing link in Hegel's (and Kojeve's) argument. Neither pay sufficient attention to the historical legacy of

[7] The concepts "being-for-self" and "being-for another" are not in Kojeve; I borrowed them from Foster, though I am using them in a slightly different way, reflecting my historical reading of Hegel's master-slave dialectic as referring to the Western state of nature, as explained in chapter six. It is worth adding that Hegel used the term "being-for-self" in reference to European barbarians (living in the state of nature) as characters who asserted themselves with no determinate end but simply in a spirit of "subjective freedom as willfulness" (in Wood: 24).

masters. They only see a relation of bondage and tyranny emerging out of the struggle for prestige. The aristocratic masters barely play a role beyond the exhibition of their willful and capricious personalities. There is a quick reversal from the combative passions of the master to the hard working slave who triumphs over his servile state of deference and goes on to deepen and develop his self-consciousness over and above the master's. In the following section I want to argue that the master – conceived as a member of an aristocratic egalitarian culture – was responsible for the development of a unified personality capable of making a distinction between what was "inside" and what was "outside" the self.

Charles Taylor and Plato's Self-Mastery

The exalted state of berserker inspiration associated with the fight for pure prestige, together with the entire IE aristocratic way of life, had a profound effect on the constitution of the human personality, awakening within it a sense of human "inwardness" and thereby leading to the discovery of the mind. The evolution of a rational self has been debated under various headings, including "the evolution of the concept of the Greek psyche," "Homeric man," "the early Greek concept of the soul," the Socratic ideal "know thyself," and "Plato's Self-Mastery". Here I can only touch on the basic features of this complex discussion. Specifically, my intent is to frame these questions as they relate to the unique evolution of a Western self increasingly aware of the distinction between personal agency (or acting under one's initiative) and extraneous forces (or acting under the influence of gods and bodily organs or processes). I will begin with Charles Taylor's major philosophical work, *Sources of the Self* (1989). This book, as the subtitle indicates, is mostly on *The Making of the Modern Identity*, which I have already discussed briefly in chapter five. In addition to those earlier points, it is also useful to consider Taylor's attempt to trace the roots of the modern notion of the self back to the ancient Greeks. According to Taylor, it was Plato who developed the idea of a "self-collected" character capable of ordering and controlling his extraneous appetites and emotions. He did so by articulating a concept of a "unified self" consisting of three parts – bodily appetites, emotions, and reason – of which reason was master of appetites and emotions (115–126). As Plato explained it in his *Republic* (1977: 129–143), this

tripartite self was said to be unified to the extent that reason was performing its proper virtue, namely wisdom, according to which the emotional part (or "spirited" element) was guided by reason in the performance of its virtues of courage and fortitude; and the appetitive part functioned in a manner consistent with the virtue of temperance.

Taylor informs us that Plato's concept of the self was not "modern" in that its ultimate criterion as to what constituted a self was defined as a natural order existing in some ideal world of perfection outside us – in the Good or the Forms – rather than within us. It was Augustine who later introduced the inside/outside dichotomy and bequeathed to the West "the inwardness of radical reflexivity" (131). This insight eventually led to the development of the Kantian idea that humans are truly free only when they come to legislate for themselves the normative ordering they wish to follow. Nevertheless, without Plato's concept of the "unified self" as a necessary means by which to come to terms with the proper cultivation of one's self-mastery, "the modern notion of interiority could never have developed" (120).

Taylor draws a sharp contrast between Plato's moral doctrine of self-mastery and Homer's concept of the self. He explains that in the modern West we take it for granted that "our thoughts, ideas, or feelings are 'within' us, while the objects in the world these mental states reflect on are 'without' " (111). This way of localizing ourselves inside ourselves is so bound up with our modern ways of growing up as singular personalities (with our own projects and inner life experiences) that we now think of this as natural. He clarifies that, on one basic level, humans at all times and places have had a sense that there is person "A" and person "B" to whom different physical attributes, actions, and momentary expressions can be attributed. Alongside this basic perception, there is, however, a newer and uniquely Western sense of agency that had its origins in ancient Greece. Plato represents the paradigmatic expression of the distinction between what is "inside" and what is "outside" a person. But this was not the way the self was viewed in Homeric times. Drawing on the commentaries of Bruno Snell (1960) and Richard Onians (1951) on the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, Taylor notes the absence in these epics of words that could be translated in a way that clearly designated the "thoughts," "psyche," "feelings," and bodily sensations of each character. The meanings of these words portray characters with a fragmented and quasi-independent self. They lack a clear sense of the mental, emotional, and bodily components of their selves. The word "psyche," for instance, rather than designating the site of thinking and

feeling, appears to designate a life force that enters the body and flees from it at death through the mouth.

Taylor makes reference to Snell's observation that Homeric heroes were driven to perform impressive deeds by a surge of energy and manic enthusiasm. This energy and enthusiasm was thought to be infused into them by gods. He compares these heroes to berserkers in "primitive" Scandinavian and early Celtic cultures; they too were filled by a kind of raging madness on the battle field – a psychic state ostensibly incompatible with the reflective and self-collected stance Plato envisioned as the ideal person in the Republic.

In other words, according to Taylor, in the Homeric epics, and in the berserker cultures of Europe, there were no fully integrated, autonomous agents or heroic characters capable of clearly distinguishing for themselves what was "inside" and what was "outside". He reads Plato's philosophy as an effort to subordinate the warrior-citizen morality of strength, courage, and glory – which grew out of the berserker barbarian past – to a philosophical morality of dispassionate deliberation. The part of the soul dealing with desire (*thymos*), which Plato associated with the warrior function, was thus relegated to a subordinate function in his *Republic*, secondary to the part of the soul dealing with reason, which he associated with the ruler function.

Taylor distinguishes, albeit broadly, between a Platonic (or Western-to-become-Modern view) of the self and a traditional view which prevailed everywhere else, including berserker/Homeric warrior cultures. He refers (113), in this context, to Geertz's anthropological reports from Java (Bali). In these reports, Geertz pointed to the absence in the language of Balinese people of words drawing a clear distinction between individual and group actions, between what was "inside" and "outside" the individual. He pointed to the way Balinese culture did not think of individuals as isolated, detachable beings, but as persons whose individualities were inextricably connected to the community and its way of life.

I think Taylor's argument is flawed. Homeric man was already becoming "self-conscious" of his individuality. Indo-European berserks lay the groundwork for the dialectical evolution of the Western spirit towards higher forms of self-awareness. Let's go directly to Geertz's argument, which Taylor barely touches upon, in order to highlight the contrast I see between Geertz's Balinese subjects and Indo-European or Homeric warriors. Geertz's familiar essay is entitled " 'From the Native's Point of View': On the Nature of Anthropological

Understanding" (1974: 26–45). The central passage of this article, on the "Javanese sense of what a person is," is the following:

> The "inside"/"outside" words, *batin* and *lair*…refer on the one hand to the felt realm of human experience and on the other to the observed realm of human behavior… *Batin*, the "inside" word, does not refer to a separate seat of encapsulated spirituality detached or detachable from the body, or indeed to a bounded unit at all, but to the emotional life of human beings taken generally. It consists of the fuzzy, shifting flow of subjective feeling perceived directly in all its phenomenological immediacy but considered to be, at its roots at least, identical across all individuals, whose individuality it thus effaces. And similarly, *lair*, the "outside" word, has nothing to do with the body as an object, even an experienced object. Rather, it refers to that part of human life which, in our culture, strict behaviorists limit themselves to studying–external actions, movements, postures, speech–again conceived as in its essence invariant from one individual to the next.

In contrast to modern Western individuals, Balinese men (and Geertz makes similar observation about other Near Eastern places) "do not float as bounded psychic entities, detached from their backgrounds and singularly named…[T]heir identity is an attribute they borrow from their setting."

Similarly, it has been a common perception that Homeric men, as well as European barbarians, understood themselves to be members of a close-knit group. As Aaron Gurevich has observed about the characters portrayed in Scandinavian *Sagas,* the "mental categories used are those of the unit, the individuals' own group: they look at themselves from outside as it were, through the eyes of society" (1995: 53). M.I. Finley has also written, regarding Homer's society, that its "basic values…were given, predetermined and so were a man's place in the society and the privileges and duties that followed from his status" (1954: 134). Every individual had a given role and status within a well-defined cultural order. A warrior was thus expected to perform the role of a warrior, to show excellence in the performance of the martial virtues. Alasdair Macintyre, in his highly celebrated book, *After Virtue* (originally published in 1981) follows Finley's idea that in Homeric society, as in other heroic societies like Iceland or Ireland, every individual acted "within a well-defined and highly determinate system of roles and statuses." He says that "it is only within their framework of rules and precepts that they [the characters of the *Iliad*] are able to frame purposes at all." He contrasts this "traditional" world of prescribed roles to the modern "capacity to detach oneself from any

particular standpoint or point of view, to step backwards, as it were, and view and judge that standpoint or point of view from the outside" (2003: 121–130).

It is also the case that Snell and Onians, as Taylor points out, have argued that Homeric man constantly felt himself decisively influenced by gods and passions beyond his control. The Homeric self was likewise seen as fragmented, determined by the flux and fusion of "inside" and "outside" forces. Snell writes: "Mental and spiritual acts are due to the impact of external factors, and man is the open target of a great many forces which impinge on him and penetrate his very core" (1960: 20). Their bodily parts are not just physical but act as agents charged with an overflowing energy. Man was undifferentiated. The *noos* is mentioned in contexts that relate to "intellectual functions," "thinking," but at the same time one can hardly speak of Homeric individuals as having a separate faculty of thought, since *noos* is also mentioned in contexts whereby men are emotionally roused to action. *Noos* is not mere intellect; it is dynamic…and emotional (Onians: 1951: 83). Yet *thymos* is also a term used mainly in reference to emotional issues; in numerous passages in the *Iliad* it is the seat of joy, pleasure, love, etc., but in others it is the organ of "knowledge" (Snell: 13). Mental acts like "thinking," "desiring," and "feeling" are ascribed to physical organs. Onians writes that the organ of mind in Homer is in the lungs; the mind or the "stuff of consciousness" is identical with breath. (1951: 32–33, 51–52). The "psyche" is a word used to characterize the soul, and something that is the prize of battle, which is risked and saved in battle, but it is also a word used to denote the breath of life which departs through the mouth (Snell: 9).

The Beginnings of Genuine Personalities in History

Thus, according to Snell and Onians, Homeric vocabulary showed an absence of awareness of a unitary self. Therefore, it would seem to follow (against what I have been arguing) that the notion of the "I" as seat of self-consciousness cannot be attributed to Indo-European/Homeric heroes. There are several reasons why these observations are only half the story. First, the interpretation that is now commonly associated with the name of Snell has not gone unchallenged. For example, Jan Bremmer, in his book *The Early Greek Concept of the Soul* (1983), believes that Homeric heroes are frequently portrayed using the

personal pronoun, saying "I wish" or "I thought", which consequently suggests that they "must have had a general sense of psychic coherence and, at least, an imperfect notion of the unity of the personality" (66–67). He also thinks that Snell ignored Homer's focus on individually named heroes, as well as the numerous heroes who defy the norms of gods and men, such as Ajax and Achilles. One should not be surprised by Bremmer's qualification that "in Homer's time the individual did not yet know of the will as an ethical factor, nor did he distinguish between what was inside and outside himself *as we do*" (67, my italics). As I argued in chapter five, Westerners had to wait for Kant to articulate the idea that to be a moral agent is to be capable of the kind of disinterested ethical reasoning that involves abstraction from external attachments and from one's emotions and interests. Nevertheless, Bremmer believes that in Homer there was already a tendency to dematerialize mental attributes or words. He notes that *psyche* has mostly a non-physical mode of existence (16–18), that *noos* is "never conceived as something material" (57), and that *thymos* is, "above all, the source of emotions" (54).

Secondly, as Malcolm Schofield (1986) has pointed out, the *Iliad* was structured around deliberation and clashes of views, about what course of action should be taken in any given circumstance and about what values should be followed. While there is no question that in Homer's time one's class or status carried strong normative requirements, and that, in this respect, decisions cannot be seen as autonomous acts of self-legislation, but must be interpreted in reference to status-based considerations, the existence of debate and disagreement is a notorious feature of Homer's epics. Finley exaggerates when he writes that the obligation to abide by the norms associated by one's status "were not subject to analysis or debate…[but] left only the narrowest margin for the exercise of what we should call judgment" (cited in Schofield: 13).

Expanding on Schofield, Christopher Gill (1996) examines four deliberative monologues in Homer's epics in which chieftains are clearly seen to face dilemmas over the proper course of action they should take, reasoning through alternative possibilities rather than acting as if their choices were settled definitely by the requirements of their status. He questions the assumption that status-based values such as *aristeuein* ("to be best" or "to win honor") were rigid codes which settled dilemmas unquestionably. He shows how four chieftains in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, including three major ones, Hector, Odysseus, and Menelaus, faced comparable dilemmas yet reached "different

conclusions by different reasoning" (71). Although none of these characters disowns the "thick values" associated with their status, Gill's conclusion, after carefully examining each monologue, is that there was a kind of self-conscious agent involved in determining what "being best" meant in different situations (70–93). Gill also detects, in the case of Hector's monologue in particular, regarding what course of action to take in his role as Troy's defender, and in response to alternative choices offered to him by members of his household, a "psychological agent who acts on the basis of reasons and reasoning." It is worth quoting this passage in full for the support it gives to the argument I am making on the birth of selfhood:

> The self involved is also an ethical agent whose reasons and reasoning are informed by the action-guiding beliefs of his community and by his engagement with his social role. It is this kind of 'self' of which Hector's monologue shows 'consciousness', and whose 'responsibility' is acknowledged. This kind of self-consciousness is displayed partly by the significant use of internalized dialogue. It is also displayed by other distinctive features…One is the use of the deliberative formula, 'that would be much better'…" (85–86).[8]

Thirdly, the words I cited earlier from Gurevich on the close-knit group mentality of Scandinavian and Germanic epic heroes were taken from his book *The Origins of European Individualism*, which argues that in the sagas of Scandinavians and Germans one can already discern an individualistic ethos. Gurevich places his argument in the context of books which had challenged Burckhardt's famous claim that the Italian Renaissance gave birth to the individual, such as Colin Morris's *The*

[8] I should emphasize that Gill is not trying to make the same point as I am; he uses the communitarian philosophies of Macintyre and Bernard Williams to challenge Snell's arguments. Communitarians argue against the value-bearing autonomous subject of Kantian theory in favor of subjects who develop values within the roles and practices of a specific community. But this makes my use of Gill all the more relevant since he uses this communitarian perspective to challenge Snell's argument that Homeric characters lacked a unified self. I agree, they did lack a Kantian notion of selfhood. Homeric Greeks were clearly value-bearing subjects, but, as Gill reasons, this does not mean that these characters were nullified or lacking in reflection in the performance of their roles. I think they were not "traditional" in the normal sense of the term, but were already showing signs of individualism. I disagree with Gill, however, that we moderns are value-bearing in the same communitarian sense all cultures are. This is the weakness of the communitarian view; its inability to understand how Western culture came to be individualistic. Taylor, known as a communitarian, has no explanation for the emergence of Plato's self. At the same time, I follow Hegel's critique of Kant's subject; the Western self grew out of a particular cultural community, as I suggested in chapter five.

Discovery of the Individual, 1050–1200 (1972). He questions Morris's presumption that the emergence of individualism was associated with a general civilizing process, the resurgence of city life, cathedrals, and universities. The barbarians of the early medieval era, he maintains, were the progenitors of individualism. "The individual in the society of pagan Europe was very definitely not swallowed up within the group – there was a fairly wide scope for self-discovery and self-assertion" (1995: 16). A latent conception of the human personality can be seen through the representation of the hero in Germanic-Scandinavian epics and mythical stories, including *The Lesson of the High One*, *Edda*, *Laxdaela saga*, *Grettis saga*, *Sverris saga*, and *Egills saga*.[9]

The very idea of the hero bespeaks of accomplishments performed by a particular name which the myths seek to immortalize. Each hero, it is true, was fated to perish, but this destiny "was not some faceless *fatum* above and beyond this world…but was perceived as part of a personal attitude to life" (22, 56) – for it was the hero who actively created his own destiny through the performance of acts that separated him from other ordinary people. Thus, Sigurd, one of the Eddic heroes, is told: 'You shall be great,/ like no-one else beneath the sun,/ you shall be higher/ than the other kings,/ rich in gold,/ poor in flight,/ you shall be fair of mien/ and wise in words (in Gurevich: 26).

According to *The Lesson of the High One*, the most important thing in the life of hero is not property, nor relatives, nor life itself, but his acts as an individual and whether they bring him glory and reputation. The reputation is the judgment an individual hero leaves behind for future generations. Gurevich cites some well known lines from *Beowulf*: 'As we must all expect to leave/ our life on this earth, we must earn some renown, / If we can before death; daring is the thing / for a fighting man to be remembered by. / …A man must act so / when he means in a fight to frame himself/ a long lasting glory; it is not life he thinks of.' (37). Sagas repeatedly express the idea that it is in battles for one's honor and prestige that heroes experience their supreme and central purpose in life. This is, I might add, the world Hegel had in mind when he said that a "willingness to risk one's life" is necessary to achieve recognition. It is the risk and the anticipation of death that make action heroic. The factors which give rise to conflicts, Gurevich observes,

[9] These sagas were written down in the late 12th or 13th centuries but most of the characters and events described relate to the 9th, 10th or 11th centuries, in reference to those areas of Europe that were the least influence by civilization at the time.

include such basic issues as damage crops, theft, disputes over inheritance, rivalry between suitors, and so on; but "all or almost all conflicts stem, in the final analysis, from actions that are perceived as offensive by one of the parties concerned, as a blow dealt against his self-respect" (47). In this sense, I would suggest that the world of the sagas was not a Hobbesian but a Hegelian/*Western* state of nature. It is to this state that we should look for the origins of Western selfhood. In the sagas, the slightest offense to a person's sense of self, an insignificant gesture or a careless word, can occasion a fight. Hegel's "first man" in history was not in search of universal recognition. But he did look at himself through the eyes of his peers, whose approval and esteem he eagerly sought, and whose contempt he could not endure.[10]

Taking all these counter points together,[11] let us return to Geertz and compare this primordial Western character to what he says specifically

[10] Gurevich may be up-to-date but the substantial work on individualism in early medieval Europe is H. Munro Chadwick's *The Heroic Age* (1912), which he later expended into a masterful two volume work, *The Growth of Literature* (1932), co-authored with N. Kershaw Chadwick. Gurevich ignored this work. The first volume (672 pages) is on the earliest poems, sagas, and stories of medieval Europe. Contrary to the authors we addressed in the previous chapter, who eagerly sought for (and barely discovered) "orientalizing" motifs in Greek heroic literature, this volume clearly shows that there were "many striking analogies between ancient Teutonic and Greek heroic poetry" (xiii). The similarities between the Greek and the Germanic (Scandinavian, Irish, Icelandic, English) stories are striking; I will list the major ones: most of the names mentioned by name tend to be persons from princely rank; most of the scenes are court scenes and scenes of adventure (65–69); warfare appears as the "essential" (70) aspect of heroic life; feasting occupies an important portion of the social life, and references to warrior's arms, the spear, sword, and shield, are very frequent (71–74); the cardinal virtues of the hero are courage, loyalty, and generosity (74–78). In a chapter titled "Individualism in Heroic Stories," the following traits are elaborated upon: in almost every story there is an individual whose adventures are the main subject of interest (82–83); the total number of personal names recorded in the stories is very considerable, and the references are "purely personal"; "the individualism of the heroic stories is reflected very clearly in the nature of the warfare they describe," which is "everywhere apt to take the form of single combats between leading men" (85–7); heroes are usually famed for their "personal courage" rather than for skill in warfare (88); "thirst for fame, especially the desire to leave a glorious name after death, appears to be the governing principle of the ideal hero" (89); the desire for prestige and the sense that someone has infringed on one's sense of personal worth are the central sources of strife (90); "a breach of a promise of marriage, desire of plunder, cattle raids are also frequent incidents of conflict." To achieve glory a leader needs to attract and maintain a large body of followers, and so "plunder is a necessity for the hero who wishes to maintain an active force of armed followers" (92–95).

[11] Let's us not forget that Snell's *The Discovery of the Mind*, the same book which says that Homeric man did not "yet regard himself as the source of his own

about the nature of selfhood or the individual in Balinese culture (and other Near Eastern societies such as Morocco):

> As a result, there is in Bali a persistent and systematic attempt to stylize all aspects of personal expression to the point where anything idiosyncratic, *anything characteristic of the individual merely because he is who he is physically, psychologically, or biographically, is muted* in favor of his assigned place in the continuing and, so it is thought, never-changing pageant that is Balinese life. It is dramatis personae, not actors, that endure; indeed, it is dramatis personae, not actors, that in the proper sense really exist. *Physically men come and go, mere incidents in a happenstance history, of no genuine importance even to themselves*. But the masks they wear, the stage they occupy, the parts they play, and, most important, the spectacle they mount remain, and comprise not the façade but the substance of things, not least the self. Shakespeare's old-trouper view of the vanity of action in the face of mortality – all the world's a stage and we but poor players, content to strut our hour, and so on – makes no sense here. There is no make-believe; of course players perish, but the play does not, and it is the latter, *the performed rather than the performer, that really matters* (1974: 26–45, my italics).

Geertz seems to be implying that Western individualism is a farce. Unfortunately, this is typical of anthropological thinking; the achievements of Western individuals "make no sense"; the substance of life lies with the impersonal mentalities of nameless groups.[12] My view is that

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decisions" (31), says that Homer's world "points far into the future: it is the first stage of European thinking" (22). As I pointed out in the previous chapter, for Snell the Olympian gods were members of a well-ordered world in whose presence the Homeric hero stood free, as a willful character "prone to the hazard of insolently overstepping his bounds" (34). The heroes of the *Iliad* "no longer feel that they are the playthings of irrational forces." Their gods did not suppress Homeric man; they elevated him, made him "free, strong, courageous, certain of himself" (32). It was these heroes who created the conditions which, in Snell's view, made it possible for a new generation of Greek lyrists, Archilochus (680–645 BC), Sappho (born sometime between 630 and 612 BC), and Anacreon (570–488 BC), to announce their own names and "become recognizable as personalities," and to write literature with "highly individual actors with a great variety of roles" (44).

[12] Claude-Levi Strauss noted similarly that primitive myths had no authors; they were created indiscernibly in the process of transmission over hundreds of years. He preferred myths to the individually-authored books of the West. The individual philosopher or artist so central to Western culture had no place in his anthropological mind, and indeed repelled him. He saw the veneration of individual originality as an illusion. As he wrote in *Tristes Tropiques*: "the I is hateful" (in Bloch 2009). This perspective is particularly marked in his study of Amerindian art. This art did not involve the personal self-displays of western art that he loathed. The Amerindian artist tried to replicate nameless traditions and, if he was doing something different, he was unaware of it.

the restlessness of barbarian individuals was the primordial source of all that has been noble and great in Western civilization. Plato was the product of this individualism; his effort to subordinate the warrior ethos to the faculty of reason was an expression of his desire to achieve rational mastery. But how do we get from the violent strife of warriors to the strife for philosophical mastery? In answering this question, I will try to demonstrate (against Hegel-Kojeve and in favor of Nietzsche) that it was the aristocratic masters, not the slaves, who first achieved self-mastery over their willful nature and thereby created the "Greek Miracle".

Nietzsche's "Homer on Competition"

One could start this section from the standpoint of cognitive psychology by arguing that rational reflection was made feasible as humans started to recognize themselves as distinct personalities with their own mental faculties in contradistinction to what was "outside" of them. Snell makes the rather insightful, though still undeveloped, point that a rational science of nature is "possible only where the physical is unequivocally distinguished from the non-physical, where a rigid line is drawn between the moved and the mover, between matter and force, thing and property" (231). He believes that the ancient Greek language was the first language in history to engender a method of making this distinction. It did so by bringing about "the substantivation of the verb or the adjective," which made possible the use of the generic definite article, which allowed for the delimitation and the definition of the non-concrete, promoting it to the status of a universal. The use of the definite article also made possible the redefinition and individualization of the universal so that one could make particular statements about it (227–35). Snell says that Homer's speech already shows signs of the use of the definite article, but it is later with Thales, for example, that one sees the use of words ("water") that are intended to postulate a common or universal substance to all individual things; or with Heraclitus who speaks of the act of thinking as a universal attribute. Democritus went further initiating an approach in which all the sensory variations within a quality were reduced to the quantitative – and thus mathematically intelligible – units of a property (238–39).

I surmise that the germ of the substantivation of the verb, and the process by which the mind was gradually identified with attributes

which belong to the domain of the adjective or the verb, which made possible the abstract conception of the mind, should be traced back to the individualizing lifestyle of Indo-European speakers. There is enough evidence pointing to the possibility that the assertive willfulness of Indo-Europeans had a profound effect on the psychology of humans, awakening within it an opposition between faculties which is indispensable for the rational development of the human species. Unfortunately this requires the study of Indo-European linguistics which is beyond my competence.[13]

Be that as it may, the movement from the purely wilful individualism and militaristic strife of Indo-European warriors required more than a change in psycho-linguistics. The Greek speaking aristocrats had to learn to achieve self-command over their overflowing desires and come together within a political community that would allow them to find some common ground and thus move away from the state of nature with its endless feuding and battling for individual glory. It is not necessary for me to detail the evolution of the Greek polis to bring this point home. Suffice it to say that after the Dark Age (into which the Greek world had descended after the collapse of Mycenaean civilization in the 11th century BC) there would emerge in the 8th century BC a new type of political organization, the city-state. Life in these city-states worked to sublimate the limitless violence of primordial barbarian war-bands. The argument I will make draws on Nietzsche's concept of "sublimated will to power" and his particular observation that the greatness of Classical Greece involved putting Apollonian limits around the indispensable but excessive and brutal Dionysian impulses of barbaric pre-Homeric Greeks.[14]

The concept of sublimation holds that the redirection of our sexual drives lies behind our cultural creativity. This concept was central

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[13] Anthony notes that all prehistoric IE languages pay attention to tense and number when speaking about an action: "you must specify whether the action is past, present, or future; and you must specify whether the actor is singular or plural" (2007:19). Events are thus framed in individual and group terms and in temporal terms with a clear indication of the number of actors involved. In non-IE languages, tense and number are not specified.

[14] This concept is common throughout Nietzsche's writings, as indicated more clearly below; a good starting point is the *Birth of Tragedy* (1872] 1967) and *Twilight of the Idols* [1889], translated and published together (1978) with *The Anti-Christ* [1895], and introduced by Hollingdale. Hollingdale comments on the meaning of sublimation in Appendices F, G, and H. Walter Kaufmann dedicates two chapters to this concept in *Nietzsche, Philosopher, Psychologist, AntiChrist* (1959).

to Freud's thesis on the "discontents" of civilized life. He wrote: "sublimation of instinct is an especially conspicuous feature of cultural development; it is what makes it possible for higher psychical activities, scientific, artistic, or ideological, to play such an important part in civilized life" (1962: 44). He believed that civilized life required a "renunciation" of the basic human drives, while adding that the mere "suppression" of our animalistic instincts, without proper "compensation" in other spheres of social life, would result in "serious [psychic] disorders" (44). Freud, however, was writing of the sublimation of the basic impulses of humans ordinarily rather than the sublimation of high spirited, individualistic drives, nurtured in a world of adventurous mobility, horsemanship, chariots, and aristocratic egalitarianism.

The position I will take is thus closer to Nietzsche's concept of "sublimated will to power" although it is not identical with it. I will rely on a reading of his fascinating short essay, "Homer on Competition," which he wrote as a young man in 1873.[15] Here Nietzsche advanced the idea that culture or convention (*nomos*) was not imposed on nature but rather was a sublimated continuation of the strife that was already inherent to nature (*physis*).The nature of existence was based on conflict and this competition unfolded itself in human institutions and governments. Humans were not naturally as harmonious and rational as Socrates had insisted; the nature of humanity was strife. Nietzsche, therefore, argued against the separation of man/culture from nature: there is "no such separation: 'natural' characteristics and those called specifically 'human' have grown together inextricably" (2000a: 187). The cultural creations of humanity are expressions or aspects of nature itself.

Nature and culture are intertwined, but they are not identical; the artistic creations of humans, their norms and institutions, constitute a rechanneling of the destructive striving of nature into creative acts, which give form and aesthetic beauty to the otherwise barbaric character of natural strife. While culture is an extension of nature, it is also a form by which human beings conceal their cruel reality, and the absurdity and the destructiveness of their nature. This is what Nietzsche meant by the "dual character" of nature; humans restrain or sublimate

[15] I have benefited from Wilson's insightful essay, "Nietzsche's Early Political Thinking: 'Homer on Competition' " (2005). See also Safranski's captivating biography of Nietzsche (2003).

their drives to create cultural artifacts as a way of coping with the meaningless destruction associated with striving.

In his first book, *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), Nietzsche referred to this duality of human existence as the "Apollonian and Dionysian duality" (1967: 33). The Dionysian symbolized the excessive and intoxicating strife which characterized human life in early tribal societies, whereas the Apollonian symbolized the restraint and rechanneling of conflict which was possible in state-organized societies. In the case of Greek society, during pre-Homeric times, Nietzsche envisioned a world in which there were no or few limits to the Dionysian impulses (without the "lighter, gentler, warmer" hand of Homer's aesthetics) a time of "lust, deception, age and death" (2000a: 188). The Homeric and classical inhabitants of city-states brought these primordial drives under "measure" and self-control, re-channeling their will to power into creative-cultural venues. The emblematic meaning of the god Apollo was "nothing in excess." Apollo was a provider of soundness of mind, a guardian against a complete descent into a state of chaos and wantonness. He was a redirector of the willful and hubristic yearnings of individuals into organized forms of warfare and higher levels of art and philosophy.

It should thus be clear that, for Nietzsche, Greek civilization was not produced by a naturally harmonious character, or a fully moderated and pacified city-state. Rather, Greeks achieved their "civility" by rechanneling the destructive feuding and blood lust of their Dionysian past and placing their strife under certain rules, norms and laws. The limitless and chaotic character of strife as it existed in the state of nature was "civilized" when Greeks came together within a larger political horizon. They continued to fight but their warfare now took on the character of an organized contest with certain limits and conventions.[16] The civilized aristocrat was the one who, in exercising sovereignty over his powerful longings (for sex, booze, revenge, and any other kind of intoxicant) learned self-command and, thereby, the capacity to use his reason to build up his political power and rule those "barbarians" who lacked this self-discipline. Nietzsche admired the way Greeks were able

[16] Much as Hanson attributed to Greek hoplites the invention of decisive pitched battle, and recognized as well its frequency among the small city-states, he was careful to point out that the demands of Greek agriculture, which was headed by the fighters themselves, left only one or two months in which the farmers could fight. He adds that "annihilation of entire armies was rare in the classical age […] Long-drawn out pursuit was also rare…the victors were not aiming for the complete destruction of an enemy army" ([1989] 2000:35–36).

to overcome the "pre-Homeric abyss of a gruesome savagery of hatred and pleasure in destruction" while at the same time remaining at ease with their superlative will to strife.

I would like to add to Nietzsche the historically based observation that the Greeks viewed the nature of existence as strife because of their unique background in a state of nature where strife was the overriding ethos. There are strong reasons to believe that Nietzsche's understanding of the nature of existence as strife (and how this strife unfolded itself in human culture) is an expression of his own Western background and his study of the Western agonistic mode of thinking that began with the Greeks. One may agree that strife is in the 'nature of being' as such, but it is worth noting that, for Nietzsche, not all cultures have handled nature's strife in the same way and not all cultures have been equally proficient in the sublimated production of creative individuals or geniuses. Nietzsche thus wrote of two basic human responses to the horror of endless strife: the un-Hellenic tendency to renounce life in this world as "not worth living," leading to a religious call to seek a life in the beyond or the after-world, or the Homeric tragic tendency, which acknowledged this strife, "terrible as it was, and regarded it as justified" (2000a: 189). The cultures which came to terms with this strife, he believed, were more proficient in the completion of nature's ends and in the production of creative individuals willing to act in this world. He saw Heraclitus' celebration of war as the father and king of the whole universe as a uniquely Greek affirmation of nature as strife. It was this affirmation which led him to say that "only a Greek was capable of finding such an idea to be the fundament of a cosmology" (in Wilson 2005).

Arête *and the Education of the Greeks*

Nietzsche's concept of strife would carry greater weight in the context of the aristocratic culture that arrived into the mainland in the 2nd millennium and created Mycenaean civilization. The etymological origins of the word "aristocracy" are Greek. I was very surprised to learn from Chester Starr that "aristocrats [have been] almost completely ignored if not condemned" in modern studies of Greek social conditions. It was with a view to rectifying this absence that Starr wrote *The Aristocratic Temper of Greek Civilization*. Starr attributed this lack of interest, in contrast to the "extraordinary concentration of attention" dedicated to slaves, to the "egalitarian" impulses of academic elites

(1992: 3–5). Unfortunately, this short book of about 80 pages restricts its definition of "aristocracy" to the time when this class had come to cultivate, particularly from the 7th century onwards, a literary ethos of its own identity. Starr even claims that "the Homeric heroes were not aristocrats" for they had not yet "consciously conceived" themselves as a group with a distinctive model of life and values. The aristocrats he has in mind are ones who had reached a material stage of evolution allowing for a refined and "polished" way of life. They are also ones who described themselves (in written sources) as the "best" or the "good" or the well-born; that is, men who were not only leading fighters in war, but aristocratic in terms of their wealth and leisure, their clothing, dinners, music, gifts of speaking, athleticism, and grace (7–15).

My definition of aristocracy includes the coarse, brawling, and unrefined (Dionysian) warriors of prehistoric times. Barbarian aristocrats were not as literate but they were conscious of themselves as the best in ability and in heroic valor, and they also exhibited a distinct and obligatory pattern of life and values. It is not clear, at any rate, why Starr thinks (12) that the 8th century was a "critical stage in the material evolution of Greek aristocratic ways of life" (in the provision of elegant and comfortable goods) considering that a military aristocracy formed the upper echelons of the wealthy and powerful Mycenaean society. Likewise, for that matter, both the Corded Ware and the Bell Beaker cultures of early Bronze Age Europe (from about 3000 BC) were dominated by an upper stratum of aristocrats in which objects of social prestige were used as grave goods, and in which hospitality between war-bands was everywhere expressed in stylish drinking vessels, often made from expensive materials, and in which horses and wheeled vehicles were commonly admired, and other objects of decoration and dressing were widely diffused. It seems to me, in any case, that neither a materialist perspective or the idea that this class possessed its own set of well-bred values captures the singular temperament of the Greek aristocracy, The upper classes of all agrarian civilizations can be said to have been well-bred, but the distinguishing value of the Greek aristocracy was based around the ideal of *arête*.

Starr complains that the Greek aristocracy "has not received much attention of late," yet he forgets the much acclaimed classic, Werner Jaeger's three volume work, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture,* originally published in German in 1939. The thesis of this work can be summed up in one sentence: *arête* was the central ideal in the

development of all Greek culture. Jaeger explains that this word was used in ancient Greece to describe human merit and excellence as well as the abilities of non-humans, such as the spirit and speed of noble horses. Only men of aristocratic birth were thought to be capable of achieving excellence in life. The noblemen were distinguished from the common people not by their wealth as much as by their possession of talents and abilities (1967: 3–6). Snell also tells us that the word for virtue in the *Iliad* is *arête*, which defines nobility, success, and reputation (1960: 158). The root of the word *arête* is the same as *aristos*, which was used in the plural to refer to the aristocracy.

The meaning of *arête*, however, did not remain the same, but changed considerably from archaic to classical Greek times. While its meaning retained its basic association with exceptional ability, it developed to include less warlike virtues. The *earliest literary* meaning of *arête*, according to Jaeger, combined the notions of "proud and courtly morality with warlike valor." This is the meaning strongly conveyed in Homer's *Iliad*. To strive always for the highest *arête* and to excel all others in battle is the governing theme of this epic. Although the aristocrats of Homer's text were bound tightly to a common ethos, and individuals were rigorously subject to the norms of their class, this ethos assigned preeminent value to the pursuit of *personal* glory (3–34). Macintyre and Finley miss the very meaning of *arête* when they define it as just another traditional code of behavior within a well-defined and fixed system of roles and statuses. Snell gets it correctly: "by means of *arête* the aristocrat implements the ideal of his order – *and at the same time distinguishes himself above his fellow nobles*. With his *arête* the individual subjects himself to the judgment of his community, *but he also surpasses it as an individual*" (159, my italics). When Achilles left to join the Greek army at Troy, his father's legendary advice was that he 'always be the best and superior to others' (in King 1987: 1–2). Great ambition was the mark of a great hero – in warfare, in the hunt, and in war-games during peacetime. Aristocrats in general had an insatiable urge for honor, the sources of which were praise and blame from one's peers. This desire was reflected in the way the meaning of the word *arête* was sometimes altered as in, for example, "to esteem" and "to respect" (Jaeger: 418).[17]

[17] The Greek gods themselves, Jaeger notes, were proud characters who would avenge any infringement to the honor due to them; he calls these gods "an immortal aristocracy" (10).

This emphasis on excellence in battle was to be found not only among the Mycenaean warriors immortalized in the *Iliad*, but among the barbarian warriors who Indo-Europeanized the continent of Europe. I suggested earlier that Nietzsche imagined a pre-Homeric world in which the expression of one's *arête* might have involved worse acts of cruelty and annihilation than in the time of Homer. It may in fact be supposed that, by the 8th century BC, and perhaps by Mycenaean times, the Dionysian life force in general, and its militant cruelty in particular, might have been mitigated or assumed a more culturally productive Apollinian form as aristocrats came to gain some degree of mastery over the "anarchy" of their instincts by forging political communities and cultivating other, less bellicose, talents. As the Mycenaeans prospered during the 14th and 13th centuries BC, and raised their standard of living, building great and sumptuous palaces decorated with brightly colored frescoes painted on walls and floors, they might have envisioned new ideals of aristocratic excellence beyond mere physical prowess and blood thirsty feuding.

Jaeger notes that in Homer's *Iliad* (this poem evokes Mycenaean times through an oral tradition which joins elements of the subsequent dark age and Homer's time) the word *arête* was occasionally used in reference to spiritual-moral traits. He believes, actually, that the earliest combination of nobility of action with nobility of mind was expressed by the old counselor of Achilles, Phoenix, when he reminded his pupil of the ideal on which he had been educated: 'to be both a speaker of words and a doer of deeds' " (8, 26). The *Odyssey*, according to Jaeger, sees a further sophistication of the notion of aristocratic excellence: "The *Odyssey* constantly exalts intellectual ability, especially in its hero, whose courage is usually ranked lower than his cleverness and cunning" (6, 22). This epic, being an account of the heroes' return and a description of his life in peace, portrays the aristocracy in a more contemplative manner within a milieu of polite speech and civil behavior.

More recent commentators on the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* have wondered whether Homer himself was not questioning the brutality that accompanied the obsessive pursuit of glory. Margaret King notes how Achilles is portrayed as both the performer of the greatest deeds of valor, the swiftest and the youngest, *and* as the most brutal and inhumane of characters. After Achilles strikes the lethal blow against Hector, he says he wishes his *thymos* would drive him to hack off Hector's flesh and eat it (1987: 26). Achilles' gruesome treatment of Hector's dead

body (slitting the ankles and passing thongs through them, and dragging it helter-skelter in the dust behind his chariot) marks the peak of Achilles martial excellence and the lowest point in this hero's actions. As much as Achilles has proved himself to be the best, one is left to wonder, on reading Homer, whether superior martial valor alone should be the best criterion of human worth. Achilles is the noblest and yet Homer has him behaving like a savage. Was Homer detaching himself (reflectively) from the ruling ethos of his time, stepping outside the conventional view, and judging it from a different set of values?[18] In one of the most memorable and touching scenes, Homer has Achilles returning Hector's body to his father Priam (in response to his supplication for his son's body for a proper burial), restoring Achilles' humanity, as he is seen to moderate (*sophrosyne*) his ferocious emotions and show sympathy for Priam.[19]

Helen North traces the evolution of self-restraint, or *sophrosyne*, in Greek literature from the *Iliad* through to Plato and beyond. She believes that the very roots of *sophrosyne* reach into the very depths of Hellenic nature. Homer was essentially voicing a growing concern among Greeks (living in city-*states,* I would add, rather than in tribal associations close to the state of nature) that self-restraint was a worthy virtue, necessary to avert disaster and self-destruction. The Delphic motto – 'know thyself' – was directed against the conceit of aristocrats who acted as if they were capable of obtaining the same glory and power as the gods. They called this pretension *hybris*. Hubristic individuals were dangerous because their highly spirited passions and

[18] But it should be noted that the *Iliad* was not unique in the presentation of conflicting values. In *Beowulf,* the absolute duty to avenge a slain kinsman is constantly honored, at the same time that the Beowulf-poet can be heard lamenting the unappeasable destructiveness of the blood-feud. The characters in *Beowulf* are single-minded in their belief that a life of courage is the highest, but they are also seen cherishing the best lord who is a "shepherd of his people," who gives them shelter, and shows hospitality and generosity. It is clear that the poet-Beowulf prefers heroes who show magnanimity rather than viciousness. I am using the Penguin edition of *Beowulf,* translated with an introduction by Michael Alexander (1973).

[19] As Onians reminds us, all the heroes behaved like savages; "Agamemnon, after slaying the suppliant son of treacherous Antimachos, cuts off his arm and head, then sends the trunk rolling…Hector strips his corpse [Patroklos, Achilles best fried] and drags it along in order to cut off the head and give the body to the dogs of Troy…Later they [Odysseus and Telemachos] took him [Melantheus] down still alive, led him through the court, 'cut off his nostrils and ears with the pitiless bronze, plucked out his genitals for the dogs to devour raw, and hacked his hands and feet with vengeful spirit', then left him" (1951: 3–4).

impulses were prone to result in actions overstepping the boundaries of civil concord. From Homer on, new standards of *arête* began to evolve away from a strictly martial conception. Odysseus, the central character of the *Odyssey*, is seen to create meaning in his life not by risking his life in battles, but in his roles of spouse, parent, and joyful companion to his friends.

This is a subject that has been well examined by Snell and North. What draws me to the earlier work of Jaeger is the way he carefully traces the development of the idea of *arête* from its "oldest" identification with warlike courage, then prudence and justice, and finally wisdom (in the writings of Tyrtaeus, Solon, Archilochus, Sappho, Aeschylus, Xenophanes, Plato, and others) *without* losing sight of "the vital significance of early aristocratic morality for the shaping of the Greek character…" In his view, "the Greek conception of man and his *arête* developed along an unbroken line throughout Greek history" (12). This ideal, which first found literary expression in the *Iliad*, "was transformed and enriched in succeeding centuries," *and yet* "it retained the shape which it had taken in the moral code of the [early] nobility." "In many details, the ethical doctrines of Plato and Aristotle were founded on the aristocratic morality of early Greece" (11, 114).

The point is *not* that a military aristocracy, as a social class, held dominion through the course of ancient Greece. To be sure, it is noteworthy, as Starr points out, that the poets, philosophers, scientists, and the democratic leaders themselves, were virtually all aristocratic in origin. The emergence of citizens did not negate the fact that it was the aristocratic elite that cultivated the "miracle" of ancient Greece.[20] But Jaeger's point is quite different. He thinks that the "class limitations" of the old ideals of *arête* as a trait peculiar to the aristocracy "were removed when they were *sublimated and universalized* by philosophy" (11, my italics). In the ideal of warlike valor (as the highest standard of human character, for which the young should be trained) there was implied the humanistic principle that humans qua humans could be *ennobled*

[20] One of the main themes in Robin Lane Fox's enjoyable book, *The Classical World, An Epic History of Greece and Rome* (2006), is the domination of aristocratic elite values and cultural pursuits through both the Greek and Roman eras. I would thus be careful with Hanson's wording (1999: xviii) that classical Greece was "the only Mediterranean culture with a clearly anti-aristocratic tradition." I am about to argue that it was due to its aristocratic individualism that classical Greece took an interest in the merits of non-aristocrats and thus the possibility of extending the opportunities for individual expression and achievement.

through the perfection of their entire personality. What is best for the best is best for all. It is worth quoting Jaeger at some length on this critical point:

> The democratic culture of Periclean Athens was the final product of a long and gradual transformation and extension of the early aristocratic tradition…The metamorphosis of the old aristocratic form of life into Periclean democracy cannot be understood merely in terms of the extension of political rights to the mass of the people. As Greek culture grew from its original and more exclusive form into something more universal and humane, it followed at the same time its own inherent tendency. For the very form of this culture implied, from the beginning, a powerful element of universality and rationality which enabled and predestined it to develop beyond class limitations into the culture of the entire Greek nation and finally into a world-civilization…The humanistic idea underlying this transformation was the assumption that, if culture be conceived as a 'privilege' due to 'noble birth,' there can be no higher claim to such a privilege than that inherent in the nature of man as a rational being. Thus instead of vulgarizing that which was noble, the cultural development of Greece ennobled the whole human race by offering it a programme for a higher form of life, the life of reason (417).

There is no space here to explain in detail the cultural and social process by which the supreme value assigned to aggressive martial values by prehistoric IE peoples and Mycenaeans was later challenged by the rise of new civic and intellectual virtues. Suffice it to say that Jaeger writes in (somewhat) Nietzschean terms that "it is a mistake to believe that Greek *sophrosyne* was produced by the naturally harmonious character of the Greek people" (167). The moderation that Apollo preached – "nothing in excess," "know thyself" – was an attempt to sublimate the aristocratic will to power of martial men, not by pacifying this will, but by bringing it under self-control by balancing the seeing mind (*nous*) and the emotive mind (*thymos*) and thus mitigating its ferocity and reckless bloodlust. As Nietzsche put it, "Apollo could not live without Dionysus" (1967: 47).[21] Self-seeking aristocrats, in their high-minded pride, were prone to forget their human limitations. It was the excessive (hubristic) pride and ambition of Achilles that led to his excessive and rather unappetizing treatment of Hector. The unfettered desire for great deeds and immortal glory needed to be

[21] Nietzsche sought to explain "why precisely Greek Apollinianism had to grow out of a Dionysian subsoil; why the Dionysian Greek needed to become Apollinian"; see *The Will to Power* (1968: 535).

counterbalanced by Apollo's code, lest aristocrats ignored the limits of Nature, and the reality of inhabiting an unpredictable world where gods ruled (Snell: 162, 179–182).

The ultimate basis of Greek civic and cultural life was the aristocratic ethos of individualism and competitive conflict which pervaded IE culture. Ionian literature was far from the world of berserkers but it was nonetheless just as intensively competitive. New works of drama, philosophy, and music were expounded in the first-person form as an adversarial or athletic contest in the pursuit of truth.[22] While Thales, Anaximander, Anaxagoras, Empedocles, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Leucippus, and Democritus each had a common interest in the hidden causes of things, each came up with their own radically new explanations (Barnes 1982). There were no Possessors of the Way in aristocratic Greece; no Chinese Sages decorously deferential to their superiors and expecting appropriate deference from their inferiors. The search for the truth was a free-for-all with each philosopher competing for intellectual prestige in a polemical tone that sought to discredit the theories of others while promoting one's own.[23]

It was not only that the Greeks "discovered" naturalistic philosophy (the Ionians), tragedy (Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides), comedy (Aristophanes, Menander), history (Herodotus, Thucydides), rhetoric (Isocrates), oratory (the Sophists), and dialectical inquiry (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle), but that each of these innovative fields was animated by a skeptical and independent disposition. Each artist and intellectual was driven by a desire for originality and fame. Homer may have remained the main schoolbook of the Greeks but there were always challengers. Early in the 7th century BC, Archilochus, for instance, broke with the dominance of the hexameter in Homer and Hesiod, and also with the traditional demands of heroic honor, admitting (in a still very warlike culture) that he had thrown away his shield in a flight – "I can get another just as good." Simonides soon followed with a new hedonistic poetry which vindicated the individual's right to sensual

[22] Jaeger notes (419) that Greek proper names "refer to such concepts as glory, reputation, fame, etc, and in addition were combined with some other word that expressed the degree of or reason for such fame or reputation" – much as was the case with the berserkers we encountered in the previous chapter.

[23] Lloyd and Sivin make this argument in *The Way and the Word: Science and Medicine in Early China and Greece* (2002); Lloyd's focus is on Greece and Sivin's is on China. Lloyd does not connect this competitive spirit to the aristocratic character of ancient Greece but argues that it was somehow generated out of the argumentative atmosphere of the democratic assemblies.

happiness, lamented the shortness of human life, and consequently challenged the ideal of a short heroic life (Jaeger: 114–135).[24]

"Among the Greeks," observed Burckhardt, "individuals determined to stand out from all others were characteristic" (in Fox: 115).[25] This desire was ingrained in the cultural and social life of classical Greece: in the Olympic Games, in the perpetual warring of the city-states, in the pursuit of a political career and in the competition among orators for the admiration of the citizens, and in the Athenian theatre festivals where a great many poets would take part in Dionysian competitions amid high civic splendor and religious ritual.[26] G.E.R Lloyd describes this agonistic atmosphere well:

> Far more than their counterparts in most other ancient civilizations, Greek doctors, philosophers, sophists, even mathematicians, were alike faced with an openly competitive situation of great intensity. While the

[24] Just as each artist was driven by a passion for originality, and just as we can distinguish the novel literary contributions of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes (as Jaeger meticulously writes, 237–381), we can also find changing conceptions of the hero in their works. Bernard Knox, in *The Heroic Temper, Studies in Sophoclean Tragedy* (1983), speaks of heroes in Sophocles' plays who seemed "unreasonable to the point of madness", almost berserker-like in their intensity and "rage of the soul," but who were nevertheless no longer exhibiting their individualism in acts of war. Heroes also included female characters. Antigone has a heroic temper expressed in her "defiance of public opinion," and "the claims of noble birth, her desire for glory, and her religious feelings" (28). Antigone is fiercely passionate; Creon compares her to a "spirited horse". Other characters – Ajax, Oedipus, Electra – are alike in their harsh passionate souls, highly sensitive to any signs of disrespect, and very demanding of what is due to them from others. They are also "lonely" heroes, whose defiant choices leave them abandoned, deserted (28–61). They prefer a short life of honor than a long life of secured but complaint behavior. They are noble characters with a fierce sense of their individuality. "In the Sophoclean hero the sense of identity, of independent, individual existence, is terribly strong. They are, all of them, exquisitely conscious of their difference from others, of their uniqueness" (36). King notes how in the work of Euripides the sad reality of war is addressed, the suffering it brings to innocent children and women; as characters turned away with loathing from the self-assertion of epic heroes and their self-aggrandizing militarism "to give praise to a new, non-aggressive heroism, the heroism of self-sacrifice" (1987: 79).

[25] Although Burckhardt was close to Nietzsche in emphasizing the agonistic nature of Greek culture, he saw Greek tragedy as an expression of a pessimistic view of the powerlessness of humanity in the face of suffering. I am more influenced by Nietzsche's idea (1967) of Greek "cheerfulness" and affirmation of life in the face of hardship and death. Burckhardt, I might add, did see in Achilles "greatness of soul" despite being "doomed to a brief life" by virtue of "striving for the superhuman." See his unfinished work, *The Greeks and Greek Civilization* [1898] 1998: 141).

[26] When Herodotus travelled around Egypt in the 5th century "he was astonished to find no organized games; [but] open competition in games is incompatible with such rigidly stratified societies as those of the ancient Near East, with their Pharaohs and other absolute monarchies at the apex, divinely sanctioned and sometimes gods themselves" (Keegan: 247).

> modalities of their rivalries varied, in each the premium, to a greater or less degree, was on skills of self-justification and self-advertisement, and this had far-reaching consequences for the way they practiced their investigations as well as on how they presented their results.[27]

This agonistic temperament actually found expression in the Sophistic-Socratic ethos of dialogic argument – in the pursuit of knowledge by comparing and criticizing individual speeches, evaluating contradictory claims, collecting out evidence, cross-questioning and arguing by means of open persuasion and refutation.[28]

This brings me to Nietzsche and his attitude to Socrates and why he thought that the proper balance the pre-Socratic Greeks had

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[27] As cited in Barry Sandywell, "The Agonistic Ethic and the Spirit of Inquiry: On the Greek Origins of Theorizing" (2000). Sandywell is on the right track in searching for the origins of dialogical theorizing in the *agonal* culture of Homeric and pre-Homeric "tribal" and "aristocratic" times. He realizes that a striking feature of Greek theorizing was its reflexivity. But he has no explanation for this *agonal* culture except that it came out of a tribal warlike past (which he does not distinguish from other warlike cultures) and a commercialized setting (which he does not distinguish from other commercial cultures). Sandywell deconstructs the origins of Greek "discourse" by revealing its murkier underside in a culture that celebrated war and maleness; but he does not face up to the paradox that this very *agonal* culture generated a dialogical way of pursuing the truth, in contrast to the non-polemical, non-investigative ways of thinking of Eastern cultures. I should add here that, according to Goldhill (2002), prose writing after the 5th century became the dominant medium of communication in Greece. Prose, in contrast to performance poetry, hymns, recitals, oral odes, or authoritative pronouncements by rulers, was a highly intellectualized form of writing, anticipated in the writings of Milesians on natural philosophy before the 5th century, but extended with enthusiasm"in the competitive market place of ideas" (23) which characterized the Athenian democratic Assembly and Law Courts. Prose was a type of writing in which views were expressed in balanced and opposed clauses ('with regard to…with regard to'), balanced and opposed vocabulary (nature/law, mind/body); in which writers linked arguments causally and used the abstract idea of probability or likelihood. It was also a form of writing in which the writer self-consciously identified himself as the author, the analyzer and estimator of prior or different viewpoints, and the authority of new knowledge.

[28] Walter Donlan (1980: xi, 183) questions Jaeger's thesis that "all later culture…still bears the imprint of its aristocratic origins," arguing that "the Parthenon was the product of Athenian democracy's proudest hour, and that Tragedy was born from the worship of Dionysus the farmers' god." But Donlan seems unsure when he acknowledges that "a premise of this study is that non-aristocrats did not so much…reject this set of [aristocratic] attitudes; rather, that as this ideal became more and more self-consciously the 'property' of aristocratic groups, non-aristocrats formulated other values, more compatible with their own social reality." My argument, however, is that *both* refined aristocratic values *and* new democratic ideas carried the imprint of their past origins in "barbarian" liberty. The aristocratic values of the early Greeks were central to the rise of democratic values themselves. Morris (1996), and Raaflaub (1988), believe that already in Homer, in the 8th century BC, there were egalitarian values in "rudimentary form." The distinction between moderated aristocratic values and incipient democratic values is, however, not made altogether clear by these authors.

maintained between the Apollonian and Dionysian impulses was disrupted by Socrates' influential claim that the cultivation of reason is the highest virtue. This view is all the more paradoxical in that Nietzsche believed that Socrates' success as a dialectician consisted in his way of pursuing truth or virtue as a new form of contest to which the Athenians were well accustomed: Socrates "fascinated by appealing to the agonistic impulse of the Greeks – he introduced a variation into the wrestling match between older men and youths. Socrates was also a great erotic" (in Nehamas 1998: 137).[29] Socrates ability to adapt the old agonistic practices to fulfill a new and different goal was a perfect materialization of his "will to power". Nietzsche thought that Socrates was living at a time when Greeks were losing the ability to maintain both the Apollonian and Dionysian impulses in equal measure. He admired the *sophrosyne* of the archaic and early classical periods, the time of the Homeric heroes, the Ionian philosophers, the dramatist Aeschylus and the poet Pindar – a time which nowhere called for a rejection of the instincts as irrational or sinful. The exhortation to self-control that Nietzsche endorsed was also one which kept reason under control, just as it sought to control the unbridled "barbaric" expression of one's passions. This was a time when Greeks were living in city-states, and were thus civil and cultured, but were altogether content in knowing that nature is not a rational whole, that the world was not made for them, that there was no ultimate rational justification for their way of life, and that there was nothing they could do to change the world for the better, as tragedy showed. But, according to Nietzsche, by the time Socrates arrived on the scene the unquestioned codes of behavior of the Homeric Greek aristocracy were breaking down and "everywhere the instincts were in anarchy; everywhere one was within five minutes of excess" (in Nehamas: 138). The Greeks were no longer confident of their old values nor could they agree about the nature of *arête* and so, as a result, they could no longer rely on the guidance of their instincts; they were losing their self-command. Socrates believed one could achieve self-mastery by giving reason preeminence over the emotions and appetites, and claimed that reason was the true human trait. "To fathom the depths and to separate true knowledge from appearance and error, seemed to Socratic man the noblest, even the

[29] I am drawing here on Nehamas's engaging chapter (1998) "A Reason for Socrates' Face, Nietzsche on 'The Problem of Socrates' ".

only true human vocation" (1967: 97). Socrates thus called upon his Athenians to mistrust their desires and to rely instead on their reason "as the highest occupation and the most admirable gift of nature, above all other capacities" (97). Socrates, according to Nietzsche, became master over himself, rationally so, and manifested this rational will to power over others, by "turning reason into a tyrant" (in Nehamas: 138) and thereby destroying the instinctive optimism and assurance of the Greeks, replacing them with fruitless efforts to seek ultimate rational grounds for one's place in the cosmos.[30]

But did *the West* really lose its *megalopsychia* ("high-spiritedness") after the post-classical and Hellenistic periods?

The Roman Aristocratic Link

In the beginning were the deeds of aristocratic warriors, not the words of Greek citizens, Roman magistrates, or Jewish prophets. The original meaning of "being-human" was essentially different from its more current meaning referring to the words, the rules of thought, and the categories we presently use to achieve synthesis, resolution, and mediation. The original Western definition of "human" was intimately connected with the epic-like desire toward excellence in battle. The highest fulfillment came through conflict, tension and primacy over other masters whose recognition one respected. Glory was the fame in which a warrior would "enter into the light" and show evidence of his "being-human."[31]

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[30] In *The Birth of Tragedy* (sections 10 to 15), the young Nietzsche had already concluded that the bad times in Greece began with Euripides, and were made progressively worse by Socrates and Plato, though he admired greatly Aristotle's nobility of mind and composure.

[31] I am drawing here on Heidegger's *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1961: 83–172). "To glorify, to attribute regard to, and disclose regard means in Greek: to place in the light and thus endow permanence, being. For the Greeks glory was not something additional which one might or might not obtain; it was the mode of the highest being. For the moderns glory has long become nothing more than celebrity and as such a highly dubious affair, an acquisition tossed about and distributed by the newspapers and the radio – almost the opposite of being" (87). I had intended to investigate further the potential insights of Heidegger on the origins of the West. I was intrigued, for example, by the reflections he offered on ancient Greece and the "original unity between being and thinking, between *physis* and logos" (166). But it seemed to me, as I read further, that Heidegger, in seeking to overcome what he saw as the cosmopolitanism of his day, which he saw as threatening to the German Volk, wrongly projected his own nationalist vision of German rootedness in the soil back onto the

The radical novelty of Kojeve's reading of Hegel's opening discussion of self-consciousness was his realization that "it is *not purely cognitive* and passive contemplation that is at the base of self-consciousness… but [the master's] Desire" (37). Yet in Kojeve as well, the master is ultimately not allowed to exercise the independent consciousness he has wrested from another self-conscious being. There is a quick reversal from the combative passions of the master to the hard working slave who triumphs over his state of deference and goes on to deepen and develop his self-consciousness beyond the master's by working upon nature according to his own projects and educating his soul.

This intellectualism and scientism is symptomatic in Kojeve's and Hegel's refusal to affirm (apart from a few paragraphs) the master's self-certainty, importance, and truth. It reigns supreme in every scholarly effort to explain the origins of the West in the neutralized language of geographic and economic factors, or as the "birth of science" and the "origins of democracy".

Historians who evaluate the Roman contribution to Western civilization also point to its literary and "civilizing" values, in particular the cultivation of a legal system which recognized each Roman citizen as a "person". This invention of the legal persona, it is argued, was reflected in the literature of Rome, the satires of Horace and Juvenal, which portrayed characters with their own individual destinies and unique personalities. Rome's architecture, aqueducts, Latin literature, and her rational infrastructure of war-making, continuous roads, fortresses, engineers, pensions, and salaries have also been highlighted (Hanson 2000a; 2000b). But in my estimation a crucial contribution has been ignored: the early Romans who came to be known as the inheritors of the Greek legacy began their odyssey from a similar archaic state of

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Greeks, invoking the myth of pure, unadulterated Greeks as the "authentic" people of the West; see Bamback (2003). The idea that the West has a subterranean, chthonic source in some archaic Greek past is a difficult one for me to accept. Not only are the Olympian gods "far removed from chthonic darkness," earthly and mysterious forces of nature, but the Mycenaean Greeks came into the Greek mainland from the outside, gradually mixing up with the original inhabitants, and with newcomers, and participating in cosmopolitan trade networks. They also continued the IE expansionist tradition by establishing themselves in hundreds of settlements overseas from south-east Spain to the Crimea (Fox: 24–37). Gimbutas has the better perspective: "One of the consequences of the semi-nomadic, pastoral existence, and mobility imparted by the horse, is a lack of connection to the earth. In this respect, the Kurgan cultures differed completely from the sedentary Old Europeans, who were rooted to one spot for generations and earned their subsistence from the soil" (1997: 358).

society and economy as the early Greeks, and from a similar form of political organization shaped by a strong aristocratic spirit of independent rule.

Before Rome's rise to supremacy, the Hellenistic cosmopolitan world of Alexander and his successors added much to the traditions of learning, art, and architecture of the classical Greeks but this legacy was not passed to the Romans in such a way that they then started their contributions as civilized or Greek-educated Romans. The early Romans, their religion and temple architecture, were influenced by the Etruscans (an indigenous pre-historic Italian people who, before the 5th century BC, had ruled central Italy). Still, the dominant languages of the prehistoric Italian peninsula were IE. The continuation of the Greek classical legacy by the Romans cannot be properly conceived without taking into account this IE background. Moreover, as we learn from T.J. Cornell's book, *The Beginnings of Rome* ([1995] 2004), which integrates decades of intense archeological activity in central Italy, the colonizing movement into Italy by archaic Greeks in the 8th century BC had a "profound impact" on the social and cultural life of the native peoples, particularly "in shaping the aristocratic society of Italy" (87).[32] These Greek immigrants emphasized an ethos of heroic living and competition (raiding, feasting, guest-friendship) "in which personal esteem was the principal goal" (88). By the 7th century BC, there is clear evidence that an aristocratic culture of a Homeric type had been assimilated into Tyrrhenian Italy as testified by the presence, for example, of monumental chamber tombs of high ranking native persons (89–93).[33]

In the course of the archaic period, Greek influence would come to influence "every aspect of life at all levels of Tyrrhenian society" – art, architecture, and religion. Most significantly, Rome in the seventh century BC, "perhaps alone among the native communities of central Italy, began to take on some of the features of the Greek polis" (118). "One of the most important features of the society of central Italy in the archaic period, is the presence of aristocratic warlords whose power

[32] On the Indo-European languages spoken in pre-Roman Italy, see Cornell (41–44). He further evaluates (77–80) Dumezil's thesis on the tripartite division of the original Indo-European society, which I mentioned in the last chapter.

[33] Michael Crawford (1986) finds similarities in the aristocratic "openness" of archaic Rome and of Greece. For an examination of how extensive the Greek colonial cities were in southern Italy, Sicily, and along the Italian coast facing the Tyrrhenian Sea, see Boardman (1964: 175–231).

rested on the support of armed personal dependents or variously styled 'clients' or 'companions'" (144–45). During the 6th century, however, Rome came to be ruled by kings who claimed to be the beneficiaries of divine powers and acted in tyrannical ways. These tyrants were ex-aristocratic figures who ruled in a populist manner by expropriating the wealth of their aristocratic competitors and redistributing it among the plebeians. But this type of government was overthrown and replaced by a republican government around 500 BC (215–17, 226–27). Thenceforth an oligarchy of nobles would enjoy the right to compete for positions of power and influence. This oligarchy would consciously rule in the name of liberty (*libertas*). Freedom from kings and monarchical rule would remain the most desired political value of all noble Romans long after they deposed their last king. Without this group of aristocrats and their values of freedom, there would have been no Republic, and the Greek classical legacy and its high culture would not have been continued as a "Western" tradition.[34]

The Hellenistic kingdoms, and the city of Alexandria in particular (Vrettos 2001), contributed major ideas in the sciences (Euclid, Archimedes, Eratosthenes) and in philosophical reflection: the Epicureans, the Stoics, and the Cynics (Patterson 1991: 184–199; Fox 1986; Barnes 1986). However, while Hellenistic cities were permitted freedom and autonomy in principle, "the kings had overwhelming superiority over all individual cities" on matters of foreign policy, taxation, and, to a lesser degree, on civic affairs (Price 1986: 330–31). The notion of a cosmopolitan citizen was contemplated, but in the long run the successor Hellenistic kingdoms took on many of the despotic, one-man rule characteristics of the Near Eastern tradition of government.

[34] Brennan writes that "the *res publica*…tolerated to a remarkable degree the open exercise of personal influence in the political and even religious and military spheres. The senate put up with noisy and sometimes prolonged conflict among its members (within limits)" (2004: 55). The two Patricians elected to the office of consul were endowed with *imperium* or great executive powers, but only for one year, and the power of each consul was limited by the other consul and the Senate. The Patricians, to be sure, monopolized power in the early Republic; Plebeians were barred from all political and religious offices. But as Plebeians came to make up much of the Roman army, as independent farmers who financed their own weapons, they gradually came to form their own tribal assemblies, elect officials with the power to promote their interests. By 367 BC one of the consuls endowed with executive powers was allowed to be of plebeian rank. The objective of Rome's Republican government was to maintain the competition of the aristocrats by not allowing any one of them to hold a position in the government that could threaten to put an end to this competition.

Space precludes a substantive consideration of Rome's aristocratic traditions and cultural contributions. A broader appreciation of this elemental Western energy would require us to go back to the Macedonians in order to investigate the ways in which they too reinvigorated this tradition of free masters just as the more civilized Greeks were in a state of exhaustion and disorientation after the vicious Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta. Some classicists are skeptical of the idea that the Macedonians were continuators of the Greek classical tradition because, for one, they were linguistically incomprehensible to the Greeks, and had no tradition of citizenship participation, but were instead a backward people who bred horses and were organized in a conglomeration of warring kingdoms. They add that when Philip united Macedonia into a monarchical kingdom he moved further away from the classical Greek practice of civic militarism. But some scholars have insisted that Macedonians became "more or less "Hellenized by about the 4th century BC." Philip patronized Greek poets like Pindar and Euripides, hired great painters and sculptors, borrowed the Greek "hoplite" style of infantry warfare, and further advanced it by introducing phalanx formations which relied on cavalry (Shea 1997: 62–76; Errington 1990: 25–26). One should not forget, moreover, that Indo-European speakers began to arrive in the Balkans sometime between the 4th and 3rd millennium, and that the speakers of a Greek dialect who migrated to the Greek mainland, and came to be known later as the Mycenaeans, originally descended from the interior of the Balkans (45–47). It is with these facts in mind that I would also suggest that the men who fought in Philip's and Alexander's armies were "free" aristocrats. Even though these two leaders had not been selected by an assembly, but were kings by inheritance, the noble members of their armies did enjoy an atmosphere of free association, and gatherings that were open and boisterous. This is why they were so outraged, as I indicated in the last chapter, at Alexander's assimilation of "orientalist" customs after he conquered Persia, in particular the custom of "proskynesis", which was utterly alien to the IE tradition of independent warriors.

The Germanic Barbarian Rejuvenation of the West

Historians who focus on the Medieval and Modern periods have likewise concentrated, as we have seen in this book, on such civilizing processes as the "commercial revolution," the "renaissance of the 12th

century," the origins of universities and corporate towns, "the idea of rights as natural attributes of individuals," or "the decisive breakthrough of modern rationalism and secularization." For all the disputes about the meaning and significance of these novelties, the pedagogical focus has been on tracing the progression of liberal-democratic values and institutions. It is as if serene and harmonious scholars sitting at their desks, or in conversations with other academics in faculty clubs, were responsible for the distinctive rise of Western civilization.

Christianity, no less than the Greek and the Roman legacy, has been chosen by many historians as the most important cultural "foundation" of the West. I mentioned in a previous chapter Lynn White's emphasis on the "Christian dogma of man's transcendence of, and rightful mastery over, nature," and the idea that humans have a responsibility to work, as part of the fulfillment of the ultimate goal of salvation and bliss. Another influential claim has been that the ultimate basis of the West's identity and development lay in the *ethical* values of Christianity (Nemo: 29–60). This religion is said to have brought to the Greco-Roman tradition a unique ethic of love, charity, and compassion, which motivated Westerners to struggle against evil and suffering in the world, and which thereby set in motion a historical process of moral progression without parallel. It is argued that, while Greek ancient ethics and Roman stoicism held that it was folly to struggle against the destiny of human limitations and the objective realities of the world, Christianity nurtured a feeling that humans could improve themselves and bring about the advent of the Kingdom of God – which was also in contrast to other non-Western religions which conceived of salvation as something achieved by escaping into the "world behind" or the "world beyond." In this hope for amelioration in the suffering of this world, there was a sense that things could change, that history was not a cycle of time but a "forward-moving" process, a linear movement from Creation to the "end of time" and to the second coming of the Messiah (Nemo: 35–6). This messianic impulse, which was evident in the Prophets and in the Psalmist writings, is believed to have given expression to the "millenarianism" of the Middle Ages, the "utopianism" of Western political thought, and the modern secular belief in economic and scientific progress.

These are strong arguments; excepting that they neglect altogether the persistent influence of Classical values on the intellectual *formation* of Christianity, the prior influence of aristocratic values on the formation of Greco-Roman culture, and the influence of Celtic, Germanic, Scandinavian, or simply "barbarian," values on the formation of

Christendom.[35] But the point I would like to make now is that the *primordial* values of Indo-European warriors would enter the developing West several times over. Despite the eventual exhaustion of classical Greece, the stagnation and "orientalization" of the Hellenistic Kingdoms, and the aging despotism of Imperial Rome, the dynamic spirit of the West was sustained thanks to the infusion of new sources of aristocratic will to power brought on by fresh waves of barbarians. The first Indo-Europeans who founded the "civilized" West (and started to leave the state of nature) were the Mycenaean warriors who comprised the background to classical Athens. The second were the Macedonians who rejuvenated the martial virtues of Greece after the

[35] We can go as far back as Philo of Alexandria, an older contemporary of St. Paul, to discover the first efforts to fuse the Septuagint, the Torah and Mosaic Law, and the Platonic and Stoic idea of a single rational law inherent in nature. By about AD 100 and AD 120, Christ had come to personify the Logos, the "Word" of the opening of St. John's Gospel. And, as members of the educated middle and upper classes joined the congregations, they found much in common between the leading Stoic school of thought and Christianity. They agreed that a single spirit, "intelligence," created and guided the movement of the world. Clement of Alexandria's (150–215) effort to write a regular and orderly treatise of Christian beliefs, a theology, has to be seen in this context, as an effort to elevate the unreflecting faith of simple "Jesus believers" to a higher understanding by means of classical learning. The goal was not to elevate philosophy above faith but to employ philosophy as a "preparatory discipline" to the study of Christianity. Origen, who succeeded Clement as head of the Christian Catechetical School in Alexandria, where he taught geometry, arithmetic, philosophy and theology, took further this effort to construct a systematic body of truth on the basis of rigorous argumentation. Christian scholars in the 1st centuries AD absorbed and debated all the intellectual currents of the Greco-Roman world, Platonism, Aristotelianism, Stoicism, Epicureanism, Cynicism, and Skepticism. The Latin Apologists, Tertullian, Minucius Felix (late 2nd century), and Lactantius (250–326 AD), came to Christianity from a classical professional background. Minucius deliberately borrowed the Greek literary style of the dialogue, together with the Roman use of legal rules of evidence, to persuade pagans that Christianity was consistent with the classical search for wisdom and goodness. Lactantius, known as the "Christian Cicero," told his readers that the Stoic notion of a cosmic rational order was consistent with the Christian idea of a benevolent Creator who ruled the world providentially. We could go on mentioning the Latin Church Fathers; for example, St. Jerome and his philological love of classical literature, St. Augustine and his profound debates with the ancient schools over matters like original sin, free will, the sacrament of penance, and the place of Rome in world history; and Gregory the Great and his application of Roman skills in administration and law to church governance. The classic work on the impact of Greek philosophy on Christianity is Edwin Hatch's *The Influence of Greek Ideas on Christianity* (1957). But Hatch goes too far in his claim that Christianity was thoroughly Hellenized. For more balanced books that acknowledge the philosophical influence of Greek thinking without underestimating the obvious Judaic roots of Christianity, see Chadwick (2005: 10–57), Colish (1998: 3–41), and Miles (2005). For a book that addresses directly the influence of barbarian values on Christianity, see James Russell's *The Germanization of Early Medieval Christianity* (1994).

debilitating Peloponnesian War, and went on to conquer Persia and create the basis for the intellectual harvest of Alexandrian Greece (Peters1970). The third were the early Romans who founded an aristocratic republic, preserved the legacy of Greece, and cultivated their own Latin tradition. And the fourth were the Celtic-Germanic peoples who interacted for some centuries with the Romans, and then developed the Western legacy within a higher fusion of classical, Christian, and barbarian values.

The "beginning" of the West was thus sustained several times over by renewed impulses of Indo-Europeans. Accordingly, I want to question the still popular perception that the barbarian invasions into Rome were a "regression" because they brought about the collapse of this civilization. It is true that for some decades now a number of scholars have gone on to replace the use of such "negative" language as "regression" "crisis," and "Dark Age" with neutral words like "transformation" and "accommodation". Peter Brown's well known book, *The World of Late Antiquity*, published in 1971, was a key text in the expression of a more positive interpretation of the end of Rome. He emphasized the gradual assimilation and intermixing of Roman, Christian, and German cultures. While I will draw on Brown's ideas to emphasize the continuity of the West from Greece to the early Middle Ages, I agree with the assessment of Ward-Perkins's book, *The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilization*, according to which, by the end of the 5th century AD, "an entirely new Germanic aristocracy had been established through extremely violent means" (2005: 4–8). I do, however, disagree with Ward-Perkins's negative view (which is closer to the still popular perception) of the barbarian invasions. He is convincing in showing that these invasions occasioned a dramatic decline in the standard of living of the West and in the intellectual skills of the general population. I sympathize with Ward-Perkins's mistrust of "postcolonial" studies which have downplayed the "civilization" of the Roman Empire and elevated the "barbarians" to the same level of cultural attainment. I am not in favour of replacing the "story of strife between Germanic and Latin peoples" with one of peaceful coexistence or multicultural assimilation.[36]

At the same time, I want to point out how the West was sustained and continued by these barbarians. The Roman order collapsed, but

[36] See the chapters in Perkins's book: "The Horrors of War," "Living under the New Masters," and "The Death of a Civilization".

without the dynamics of an expansionary barbarian aristocracy the Latin West would have been unable to overcome the degeneration of Imperial Rome and the pervading influence of Near Eastern values within the Empire.[37] Let us think for a moment about the fate of Byzantium (or the Eastern Roman Empire) as it was transformed into a Greco-Oriental civilization that would eventually be unable to overcome the full ascendancy of Islam. The Emperor Justinian (527–565 AD), to be sure, did manage to restore some of the glory of the Empire by re-conquering Roman provinces in North Africa, Italy and Spain from Germanic rulers. He also made a fundamental contribution to the continuity of the West by promoting the completion of the *Code of Justinian*, which simplified and organized the vast body of civil law which had been accumulated over the centuries, and by supporting lawyers in the creation of a handbook called *Institutes* for the education of students, as well as a *Digest*, which was an extremely valuable collection and summary of centuries' of commentary on Roman law by legal experts (Ostrogorsky 1969). The Justinian Code would constitute the essential source of the Papal Revolution. But during the 7th and 8th centuries, knowledge of classical literature and science gradually disappeared from this civilization except for a tiny community in Constantinople. And, by 750, the Byzantine Empire had been reduced to a small regional power struggling for survival under the pressure of constant Persian attacks in the south, combined with ferocious assaults from the north by the Avars (who were originally from the eastern Asian steppes) and by a dynamic new enemy (the Muslims) who defeated the Persians and almost conquered the city of Constantinople itself between 716 and 718 (Kaegi 1995).

[37] In my view Wittfogel exaggerates the "orientalization" of the Roman Empire. The Romans were not automatically orientalized with the "Hellenization" that came from the "Oriental" Hellenistic kingdoms, as he claims (1957: 211). I do believe, however, that the Western tradition would not have endured in a Roman world that was increasingly coming under the influence of "orientalizing" motifs, certainly in the eastern areas of the Empire. While Wittfogel's view has been discredited due to the negative connotation implied by his use of the term "orientalization," it is worth noting that Ball Warwick's *Rome in the East* (2000) has received scholarly notoriety in its effort to persuade us, against Eurocentrics, that the story of Rome after the death of Christ, and in the regions of Syria, Jordan, and northern Iraq, was "a story of the East more than of the West" (which seems reasonable enough). He states flatly that these lands were responsible for the "orientalizing" of Rome (443), with which I agree up to a point. At the same time, I cannot agree with Ball's multicultural and anti-Western account.

If the coming of the Germans was "very unpleasant for the Roman population," as Ward-Perkins contends (10), it was indispensable to the preservation and rejuvenation of the Western aristocratic-libertarian spirit. It was the vigor, boldness, and acquisitiveness of Germanic warbands that kept the West alive. These lads were uncouth and unlettered, much given to quarrelsome rages, but they injected energy, daring, and indeed an uncomplicated and sincere love of freedom, a keen sense of honor and a restless passion for battle, adventure, and life.[38]

By the 5th century most Germanic tribes had kings usually chosen by the great men. They were beginning to leave the "state of nature". The most basic units of the Germanic peoples were still kingship-based clans consisting of all the households and blood relations loyal to the clan chief who protected them and spoke on their behalf before the king. Clan chieftains looked to the king for military leadership, plunder and land, and in return swore loyalty to him. The Kings were not autocratic but were elected by the chiefs who were, like the king, men of noble birth. The relationship between the kings and the chiefs was, therefore, a free arrangement among *peers* based on mutual interests. There was considerable social fluidity: men rose and fell depending on the king's favor, the king's economic fortunes and leadership, and the ambitious nature of other chiefs (Todd 1992).

By the mid-8th century, however, these tribes had managed to consolidate themselves into four kingdoms in the lands that had once formed the western side of the Roman Empire: the Lombard in Italy, the Visigoths in Spain, the Franks in Gaul, and the Anglo-Saxons in England. The most successful of these were the Franks who managed to reunify most of the western European territories. The Carolingian Empire created by the Franks during the 8th and 9th centuries attempted to imitate the Roman Empire, but it never really managed to create a standing army, a professional class of civil servants, a network of regular communications, and a monetized economy. The authority of the Frankish kings was essentially based on personal loyalty rather than bureaucratic rule. Charlemagne (r. 768–814) tried to centralize his power by reorganizing the government around territorial units called

[38] It is interesting to read the famed statesman and French historian Francois Guizot write that it was "the barbarians [who] brought in and deposited in the cradle of modern civilization, where in it has played so conspicuous a part, has produced such worthy results […] a love of liberty displaying itself at all risks, without any other motive but that of satisfying itself" ([1828–30]: 1972: 180). This is close to what Hegel had in mind by the term "being-for-self".

counties, each administered by counts sent to lands where they had no kinship ties to serve as representatives of the state. But by the 10th century AD the Carolingian unity was gone, and local aristocrats stepped back into power. The barbarians reverted, as it were, back to the state of nature.[39] The 9th and 10th centuries also saw a new wave of invasions by nomadic but non-Indo-European horsemen known as Magyars, who moved mainly into Eastern Europe, and by Vikings who were ethnically Indo-Europeans – Danish, Norwegian and Swedish – and came in shallow-draft ships up the rivers of Europe, raiding and plundering deep into France. Some Viking bands conquered and settled in England, Iceland, and parts of Ireland; and others founded settlements in Russia, sailing down the Dnieper and the Volga all the way down to the Black Sea and the Caspian. There is evidence that one Viking band settled temporarily in Greenland and across the Atlantic on the coast of Newfoundland.

Feudalism: an Aristocratic Type of Rule

Some have argued that feudalism emerged out of the chaos that ensued with the collapse of the Carolingian unity and with the onset of the Viking invasions. This argument has been expressed in a vigorous way by N. Bisson in a much debated paper, "The Feudal Revolution" (1994). He saw feudalism as a product of a *particular* historical conjunction characterized by the loss of Carolingian public power and an unprecedented "privatization" of political power by a "new" class of aggressive local aristocrats. He argued that this new class was responsible for a "feudal revolution" in the 9th to 10th centuries, leading to the establishment of local hegemonies that were largely independent of

[39] It has not been uncommon for Europeans to use the term 'state of nature' in reference to all barbarian societies lacking central authorities. In the case of Europe, during most of the medieval era, the term has been commonly used to refer to the barbarian age. Here is Gibbon: "In the state of nature every man has to defend, by force of arms, his person and his possessions; to repel or even to prevent, the violence of his enemies." He contrasted the 10th century with the 18th century in Western Europe; in the former "the nobles of every province disobeyed their sovereign…and exercised perpetual hostilities against their equals and neighbors. Their private wars, which overturn the fabric of government, formed the martial spirit of the nation. In the system of modern Europe, the power of the sword is possessed, at least in fact by five or six mighty potentates; their operations are conducted on a distant frontier by an order of men who devote their lives to the study and practice of military art; the rest of the country enjoys in the midst of war tranquility of peace" (in Black 2000: 9).

any central authority, and which enjoyed extensive juridical controls over a class of longstanding free peasantries. It is my view that "feudalism" was essentially derived from the early medieval society of tribal-bands. What allows a war-band to take on the character of a "feudal institution" is the granting of a unit of land known as a fief by the band leader (the lord) to his followers (the vassals) in return for their loyalty and service. I accept F.L. Ganshof's argument in *Feudalism* (1961) that the union and spread of vassalage dates from the period of the early Carolingians in the 700s AD. It was the Carolingians who "deliberately pursued" a policy of granting fiefs to their vassals in the hope of ensuring their loyalty and thereby increasing their authority (51).

However, in my view, the background sources of feudalism go further back to the aristocratic character of Indo-Europeans. What was different about feudalism was that it formalized the bond of loyalty between military chiefs and followers. It did so through the performance of an act of homage which took the form of an oath in which a kneeling vassal placed his clasped hands between the hands of the lord and gave his word to be loyal to him. This personal relationship between vassal and lord was as egalitarian as that between tribal chiefs and their followers. The lord reciprocated the vassal's fealty by swearing to protect him and, as Ganshof points out, the Carolingian lords increasingly granted fiefs to their vassals as a way to solidify their loyalty and provide them with the economic means to acquire armor, weapons and horses.

Now, to some degree, Ganshof's view is not inconsistent with Bisson's insofar as he refers to the period between the 10th and 13th centuries as "the classical age of feudalism" – it was then that feudalism took on the long lasting *decentralized* form of rule with which it has come to be identified (65–105). There was an inbuilt tendency within feudalism towards decentralization. The provision of a grant of land entailed the enjoyment on the part of the vassals of certain immunities or political prerogatives in the governance of their fiefs including, for example,, the right to collect rents from the peasants who worked the land, the right to adjudicate disputes over property inheritance, punished crimes, and the right to have a private army (Bloch 1961a: 163–175, 211–224). Moreover, since this was a relation between free nobles, there was a tendency, particularly in times of precarious central authority, for the lord-vassal relation to be reproduced and extended both upwards and downwards within the hierarchy of the aristocratic class. The wealthy vassals, who had feudal bonds with more powerful lords, were themselves capable of fashioning from their own extensive lands

smaller fiefs for their own retinue of followers who, in turn, were capable of becoming lords over lesser vassals down to the level of fighting men who were of noble birth but had no land and were eager for military adventures and fortune. In practice, therefore, feudalism encouraged a decentralized form of political authority that descended from the king down to the lowest members of the aristocracy. But this system of stratification was not a hierarchy of submission. While lords were naturally disposed toward the augmentation of their territorial sovereignty, and always on the look-out to retake fiefs from vassals who had failed to perform their duties, it was equally natural for vassals to seek control over their lands on a permanent and categorical basis. The stronger tendency within feudalism was thus for power and ownership of territories to pass downwards toward the lower stratum. In the long run, fiefs, which were supposed to revert back to the original lord at the death of the vassal, came to be seen as inalienable and inheritable property by future generations of vassals who were indeed wont to increase their own powers by seeking additional fiefs from different lords (Poggi 1978: 16–35).

The claim that feudalism, with its autonomous and precocious aristocracy, was a "product" of the breakdown of the Carolingian Empire sometimes hinges on the presumption that this Empire was a "patrimonial" regime similar to those Eastern empires in which the ruling class consisted of officials who were appointed by a supreme autocratic ruler. It has been argued (Mann 1986), in this context, that patrimonial domination *per se* has a tendency to slide into a type of feudal rule due to the obvious difficulties in communications which traditional societies faced. Not only did they have difficulties controlling local officials in remote areas, but the officials themselves were inclined to treat their office-domains as hereditary property. In traditional societies kinship relations were also very difficult to dilute and replace with "bureaucratic" norms. Historians have thus discovered Sumerian feudalism, Chinese feudalism, Japanese feudalism, Islamic feudalism, and many other decentralized forms of authority wherever they have found weak central authorities, dynastic breakdowns, or strong warlords lording within their own localities.[40]

[40] It was Rushton Coulborn and his collaborators who went on to find cases of feudalism in all those instances in which they observed empires in a state of disintegration; see Coulborn, ed., *Feudalism in history* (1956). Some Marxists have also maintained that feudalism is merely a decentralized form of exploitation in which private landowners extract rent from the "primary producers," in contrast to a centralized

As I see it, the feudal bond between lord and vassal was a contractually based relation entered into between two men who had an intrinsic sense of their noble status. Whereas vassalage was a relationship that originated in an army of free warriors with a heroic sense of honor, patrimonialism was a relationship that originated in the ruler's need to acquire personal servants and personal representatives of the state. Whereas the lord could not impose duties on the vassal arbitrarily, the patrimonial ruler was, in principle, in a position to withdraw the "rights" he had granted to office-holders. Whereas the relation between lord and vassal was binding to both parties in that it followed a code of honor involving personal loyalty and pride of noble status, the patrimonial relation followed a pattern whereby officials were dependent on the ruler for their well being. This is why it resulted in a widespread practice amongst patrimonial rulers in the eastern world to recruit and train people of low social origin (slaves, serfs, *coloni*, and eunuchs who did not possess any family and local connections of their own but were, instead, entirely dependent on the ruler) to become officials of the state (Bendix: 334–81).

Therefore, the propensity of patrimonial rule to decentralize should not be characterized as a tendency toward feudalism.[41] Officials who

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form of extraction in which state officials collect taxes. But instead of calling the centralized form of exploitation "patrimonial", they call it "tributary." See Haldon (1993) and Wickham (1985). For Haldon, whether the state is dominated by a despotic, one-man government or by an elite of aristocrats is of no fundamental importance; whether the surplus is extracted by the state through the collection of taxes or by a private landowning class through the imposition of rents is of no significance as far as the "fundameneal form of surplus appropriation is concerned": both types of rule are based on the exploitation of a peasant producing clss. It does not matter either whether the peasants are free proprietors or serfs: labor rent, rent in kind, money rent and tax are all forms of unpaid labour within the same tributary mode of production (75–87).

[41] The classic study on feudal and patrimonial forms of authority is to be found in Max Weber's *Economy and Society* (1976). To some degree I follow Weber's contrast between these two types of authority. While he saw feudal forms of rule outside Europe, it was only in the European or "Occidental" version that he wrote of "free" feudalism, which he defined as a unique form of rule characterized by a contractual relation in which a knight would enter the service of a ruler while remaining a free man (1072–87). The "essence" of Occidental feudalism, he wrote, "is status consciousness…everywhere the vassal had to be a free man, not subordinate to the patrimonial power of the lord" (1081). This free association was lacking in "Oriental feudalism" (1077). Weber writes that patrimonial rulers were always contending with various centrifugal local powers (1040–57), but he does not use the term "feudal" in reference to those instances in which centralized rule was broken up into decentralized units of power. Mann, however, writes of patrimonial and feudal rule as two developmental tendencies, centralizing and decentralizing, experienced by all traditional empires (1986: 171–74).

held prestigious positions in the administration of an empire, including members who acted arbitrarily against subordinates within their localities in a similar fashion to how their ruler acted towards them, should not be viewed as "noble" even when they managed to achieve almost complete independence from the ruler or when they came to enjoy "privileges" not available to the rest of the population. What gives European feudalism its unique identity is that it is a type of political order based on a contractual agreement between free men who are ennobled in the calling of arms.

Medieval Japan is the one non-Western society that appears to have been closest to European feudalism in that it was characterized by a formalized fragmentation of power in which a class of war-lords granted vassals tenements similar to the fiefs of the West. But, as Bloch noted, "Japanese vassalage was much more an act of submission than was European vassalage and much less a contract" (1961b: 447). It was also stricter in that vassals were not free to pay homage to a plurality of lords. Perry Anderson made a similar argument. Having first indicated that Japan experienced a type of feudal rule between the 14th and 15th centuries, which combined the traits of vassalage, benefice and immunity, he noted that the Japanese relation between lord and vassal was "less contractual," as the emphasis was more on the inequality of the relation than the reciprocity. The authority of the lord was "more patriarchal. There were no vassal courts, and legalism was generally very limited" (1987: 414). European vassals enjoyed "rights of immunity" in their own lands (407–10). The lords, as Bloch emphasized, were equally required to fulfill their contractually agreed obligations under penalty of losing their rights over vassals. It was a "universally recognized right of the vassal to abandon the bad lord" (Bloch: 451). There was a "right of resistance" by vassals, even against the king, under the expectation that a "good" king should be held responsible for the performance of his duties to his free aristocratic subjects. This expectation refers back to the Germanic tradition of kingship where kings were expected to succeed in warfare *and* to show generosity to their followers, lest they lose the loyalty of his tribe.

Charlemagne's Continuation of the Western Tradition

Let me get back to Charlemagne in order to challenge the claim that he was a prototypical patrimonial ruler due to the high degree of royal

authority he exercised over his vassals.[42] There is some truth to this claim. Aristocrats, as I indicated earlier, have a strong desire for supremacy, tyrannical behavior or, for that matter, paternalistic government. Charles placed a strong emphasis on his *bannum*; that is, his power to prohibit and to punish transgression of his orders. He appointed territorial officials or counts and delegated them with his royal *bannum* to command and enforce the authority of the king in the districts of the empire and also to collect tolls and taxes due from the locals. Counts were removed when they committed grave mistakes. Charlemagne also institutionalized the *missi dominici*, or emissaries, from the imperial court who were charged with specific missions including, for example, investigations of an injustice and, if necessary, to put an end to particular infractions and disloyalties, or to inquire into instances of usurpation of the rights of the king (Ganshof 1970; 1971: 55–67). These emissaries were also responsible for making known to the local notable men the orders and wishes of the king, including reporting on the manner in which the counts were performing their duties. Another patrimonial element of Charlemagne's power was the withdrawal of his *gratia* or favors, such as offices, benefices, and gifts, from officials who failed to comply with his orders (Ganshof 1971: 66).

Yet, for all these appointments and public regulations, Charlemagne's army was made up of royal vassals who, like the warriors of the old Germanic war-bands, were members of the free-born aristocratic class, some of whom were already holders of large estates or had been rewarded with benefices for their services, from which they could feed vassals of their own (Ganshof 1961: 20–61). When the Carolingian unity ceased in the 10th century, it was almost a natural step for these aristocrats to reassert, in full, their authority and their privileges in their local world. Charlemagne is not outside the Western tradition; he was a commanding aristocratic warrior who managed to exercise some degree of patrimonial authority over the Frankish aristocracy without, however, undermining their pride of noble status. He was a typical but extremely talented chieftain who attained the Indo-European ideal of

[42] Weber called the Carolingian state "patrimonial" in reference to all types of rule in Europe consisting of a king relying on his officials. Weber limited the term "feudalism" to those types of rule that relied on the service of a fully independent "knightly" class.

immortal fame. But there was something new to this Germanic ruler missing in the earlier chiefs.

First, he accorded great importance to the Christian dimension of his power, as is evident in his orders and laws disallowing the harming of churches, widows, and the "economically weak," and also in his orders to the clergy to celebrate masses, to address supplications to God, to rigorously observe fasts, and to join in charitable activities (Fichtenau 1963: 34–36). While his resurrection of the Roman Empire was more a hopeful look into the future than an actual reality, his efforts to achieve administrative, legal, and monastic unification played a crucial role in countering the centrifugal chaos of the times. Moreover, by resurrecting the organization of the Church, which had nearly disappeared by the 7th century, into a strict hierarchy of offices, as well as revitalizing and endowing new monasteries, Charlemagne revived and expanded the literate tradition of the West.

This revival (away from the state of nature) had some precedents. The barbarian invasions of the 5th century had brought about a considerable decline in learning, but by no means entirely and only for some time. The assimilation of classical culture by the founders of Christianity was continued right through the perilous centuries of the Germanic invasions, starting with Martianus Capella (5th century) who worked to preserve and defend all seven of the liberal arts, drawing on Cicero, Aristotle, Euclid, and Ptolemy; followed by Boethius (480–526), Cassiodorus (480–573), Isodore of Seville (560–636), the venerable Bede (672–735), John Scotus Erigena (810–877), and others (Colish 1998). Even poor isolated Ireland, a tribal desolated place devoid of schools and of any Latin or Greek speaking inhabitant was able, by 600 AD, to send numerous monastery-educated missionaries across Western Europe to read Latin and teach the basics of Christian education. These monasteries, which were spreading throughout Europe, were inhabited by monks who not only taught and copied Christian texts but meticulously preserved non-Christian texts as well, and thus kept classical learning alive, including the poetry of Virgil and Juvenal, the scientific writings of Pliny the Elder, the philosophical ideas of Boethius and Cicero, and also numerous works by lesser known grammarians, mathematicians, and physicians. During the same period, through the initiative of St Gregory the Great, Anglo-Saxon England saw the establishment of a centre of higher learning in Northumbria. The greatest representative of

this Northumbrian 'Renaissance' was Bede, author of thirty-five works of grammar, theology, history, biblical commentary and science (Dawson 1950).[43]

With the establishment of some degree of political cohesion by Charlemagne, and the revival of trade, he set out to organize and centralize the cultural activities which otherwise would have remained stranded in different local schools. He was the first "barbarian" aristocratic ruler to revive and promote ancient culture; the first to inaugurate one of a series of Western "rebirths" in the study of the classics. He was, in other words, no longer your typical berserker, wayward and lacking in deferential projects for his people.[44] He established the famous Palace School at Aachen, where he brought some of the most learned men from Ireland, Northumbria, Spain, Italy, and from his own lands. This Palace became a major teaching source for the sons of the aristocracy, civilizing them to become train scribes, administrators, and monks (Fichtenau: 79–102). Charlemagne's coronation in 800 at the hands of Pope Leo III (r. 795–816) bespoke of a "Germanic" ruler who consciously sought to link himself to the Western Roman tradition because he understood that a geographical region of the world called "Europa" had become the center of a new epoch in the making of the West.

Some say the Carolingian unity was soon marked by "failure," decentralization and barbarian breakdown (Le Goff 2005). But the seeds

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[43] Dawson's *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*, based on his Clifford Lectures in 1948–49, is now a neglected classic. What raises this book above the rest is its keen appreciation of the indispensable contribution of Christianity to the making of the West; prior to the 12th century Renaissance, or even before the Carolingian Renaissance, he writes of the "disciplined and tireless labor of the monks which turned the tide of barbarism in Western Europe" (53), including the Byzantine Tradition.

[44] It has been said that Einhard's (770–840) *Life of Charlemagne* (1977), written by a monk and a diplomat, should be taken as an idealized or romanticized portrayal. Ganshof (1971: 7–9) thinks that the picture that Einhard brings to us is quite reliable considering the times. I tend to agree. The same ruler, who conducted, in the words of Einhard, "prolonged" wars, "full of atrocities," against the Saxons (Einhard: 61), was the same "noble" and "pious" ruler who was at the service of God. Einhard believed in the sincerity of Charlemagne when he called upon both clerics and laymen to rule their lives according to divine precepts. On the wars waged against the heathen Avars, he concluded with these words: "the site of the Khan's palace of the Avars is now so deserted that no evidence remains that anyone ever lived" (67). Yet, he contrasted Charles "enterprising" leadership to the reckless brutality of the barbarians around him. He emphasized Charlemagne's capacity for adversity, endurance, as well as his less capricious, and more civilized virtues, his magnanimitas, *prudentia*, *patienti*a, and their synthesis with his still aristocratic *animositas* or restless pride.

planted in Anglo-Saxon Northumbria would bloom again during the reign of King Alfred the Great (871–99), despite the energetic Viking invasions. Alfred was another judicious and restrained warrior who would embark on a comprehensive program of learning and administrative reforms that would bring about the political unification of England. Influenced by the Carolingian example, Alfred lamented the decline of Latin from what had been achieved during the 'Golden Age' of the seventh century. He believed that his kingdom should, in his words, "turn into the language [Latin] that we can all understand certain books which are the most necessary for all men to know." [45] He translated himself in English Gregory's *Pastoral Care*, Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*, and St Augustine's *Soliloquies*. Alfred attributed the successes of the Viking invasions not only to the lack of fortified towns and an organized army, but also, in the long run, to the lack of a learned generation of officials capable of handling judicial, administrative, and religious responsibilities, which he set out to remedy through the establishment of a school, a law-code and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Some decades later, in the German lands, there would be another rebirth, the "Ottonian Renaissance," under the patronage of the Saxon Emperor Otto I (936–973), where Greek philosophers from Byzantium and Italian scholars would go on to stimulate learning, after the collapse of the Carolingian unity, and in the face of new waves of barbarians. This would be promoted by the very Saxons against whom Charlemagne had waged Christianizing wars some eighteen times. This time it was the Saxons who would wage punishing wars against polytheistic Slavs, Scandinavians, and Hungarians, all of whom would be eventually converted to Christianity. Otto, too, would seek to link his reign to the Roman past by seeking in 962 AD a Pope that would crown him Emperor. His dynasty would soon fall, followed by feudal relations of government, but Otto I, and his son Otto II, who was also crowned in Rome, would help resurrect traditions of learning that would go on to develop into an extraordinary period of Western cultural creativity during the 12th century, unequalled since ancient Greek times (Dawson 1932: 169–85).

[45] Alfred the Great's reign is best described by Asser in his *Life of King Alfred* (written in 893 AD). Asser's remarkable account is now one a Penguin Classic: see Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge, *Asser's Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources* (Penguin: 1983). The following passages are taken from this edition.

Christian Virtues and Aristocratic Expansionism

The West of AD 1000 was still an extremely disorderly world. The rise of feudalism brought on numerous conflicts over boundaries and jurisdictional rights, disputes which could not easily be resolved by appeal to the authority of public institutions. The contractual character of the lord-vassal relationship encouraged persistent "private wars" at every level and in every locality. Nevertheless, by about this time, all pagans had been Christianized, and thus the violent Christianization of pagans had ceased. It was in this context that the Church sought to promote the ideal of peace in a sincere effort to quell the violence between Christians. The Peace of God and the Truce of God, enacted between 990 and 1048, were ecclesiastical laws designed to counter the atrocities and depredations of quarrelling lords and vassals. From then on, in principle, and with some degree of success, anyone who robbed churches, attacked unarmed members of the clergy, stole from peasants and from merchants, and destroyed vineyards or mills, was to be excommunicated (Le Goff 2005: 46; Bloch 1961b: 412–420). War-making and plundering were likewise forbidden on religious holidays and from Thursday to Sunday.

Together with this "civilizing process" there occurred the Christianization of the traditional feudal ceremony wherein a young warrior was publicly and ceremoniously presented with arms on the occasion of his initiation into the war-band of his lord. I agree with Bloch that a "modification of vital importance was introduced into the old ideal of war for war's sake," as this once strictly military ceremony was now anointed, as it were, by the Church at the end of the 12th century (316–19). By presiding over the rituals of knighthood, the Church supplemented the earlier Germanic and feudal heroic ethos with a more altruistic ethos serving the common weal of Christian society as a whole. It was common, following the 12th century, for oaths of a young warrior to include a commitment to defend the Church, to support and defend women, widows, and orphans, and others who were unable to defend themselves. "In this way," writes Dawson, "the knight was detached from his barbarian and pagan background and integrated into the social structure of Christian culture" (1950: 147).

Dawson is keenly aware that the knightly class remained a militaristic order and that the Church was not under any illusions that love and sensitivity would be the new aims of "those who fought." The Christian Church, having long assimilated the realities of empire, state, and war,

had no intentions to rid society of the physical energy and courageous dispositions of knights.[46] The Church was hoping to redirect the energetic but destructive impulses of the aristocracy toward ecclesiastical

[46] There is a widespread perception that the early Christians, with their ideals of love and peace, by and for the humble, rejected the use of force in all circumstances. References are made to an incident in which Peter drew his sword to protect Jesus, and Jesus admonished him with the words: 'Put up again thy sword…for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.' But Christianity's attitude to violence is more complicated. The kingdom of this world was that of a fallen humanity, and as Christians came to respect, and accept Roman worldly values, its rewards and motivations (the world which Emperor Constantine publicly claimed to be saving in converting to Christianity), Christians were moved to deal with such questions as the difference between violence committed by converted Christians who were members of the army, and violence committed by an act of murder. In the first centuries, when Christians were in the minority and outside society, the ideals of pacifism did prevail, but as Christians joined Roman society, some wondered whether Christians should allow the fall of civilization to barbarians. By the 4th century, Christians were making a distinction between a mere act of murder and an act of violence committed by a soldier who had to kill to defend his people against the enemy. There was still a strong sense that members of the Church should abstain from military activities, and from the imposition of capital punishment. But this was, of course, difficult and unrealistic insomuch as Christian bishops, priests and deacons, in the context of a declining Roman administrative order, were increasingly acting as civil officials. See Chadwick, *A History of Christianity* (2005), and Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity* (1971).

Christianity is undeniably a religion with its own values notwithstanding the influence which Hellenic and Roman culture exerted on its very formation – a faith which never abandoned its commitment to the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount. While Greek and Roman philosophers tended to think that not all humans were equally worthy of esteem and respect, Christians insisted upon the fundamental equality of all individuals in their singular presence to God. In the *New Testament* idea that God became flesh in the Son was the notion that God had conferred divinity on each individual, made each person in the image of the Creator, and thus the idea that each person was worthy of the dignity due to God (Novak 1998). But again, we must pay attention to the incorporation of the moral virtues of Hellenism into Christendom. This is evident, for example, in St. Ambrose and his widely studied book, *On the Duties of Ministers*, which evaluated the proper life of a Christian minister in terms of the classical virtues of wisdom, temperance, courage, and justice, as well as the Christian virtues of faith, hope, and charity (Dawson 1932: 43–5; Colish: 20). It is evident, moreover, in the Christian acknowledgement of the necessity of the use of force to protect Christian life, a view that finds explicit philosophical expression in the doctrine of "just war" first propounded by St. Augustine. This doctrine stated that war should never be for its own sake, but for the "right reasons" and under "rightful authority", with the intention to achieve peace, and with the appropriate means ("mercy should be shown to the defeated parties or prisoners if they are no longer a threat to peace"). Augustine thus rejected the Roman "lust for dominating others". At the same time, however, Augustine never pushed aside the classical virtues of bravery, fortitude, and loyalty, but preserved them, though not in the coarse manner in which they were found originally among Indo-Europeans and still amongst refined, Ciceronian, but militaristic Romans. For an established study on the reversal of the Christian turn-the-other-cheek doctrine from Augustine through to Aquinas, see Russell, *The Just War in the Middle Ages* (1975).

ends. The proclamation of the Crusade for the recapturing of Jerusalem at the Council of Claremont in 1093 can be seen in this light, as a way of rechanneling "the warlike energies of feudal society by turning them against the external enemies of Christendom" (Dawson: 149). Retaking Jerusalem from Muslim occupation "satisfied the aggressive instincts of Western man, while at the same time sublimating them in terms of religious idealism" – that is, it offered a way to reconcile the "the aggressive ethos of the warrior with the moral ideals of universal religion" (151).

I would also like to draw attention to the additional moderation of the feudal warrior envisaged in the rise of the phenomenon of chivalry and courtliness. (I do not mean the moderation which, to paraphrase Montesquieu, has its origin in indolence, but a moderation which derives from virtue). The same period which witness the revival of city life and of commerce, the proliferation of heterodox religious movements (Cistercians, Franciscans, and Dominicans), the veneration of the Virgin Mary and the ideal of the loving mother, saw a new romantic portrayal of the aristocratic hero (Le Goff: 75–81). The brave and loyal but rather vindictive and callous pagan hero came to be supplemented by a new ideal knight who was equally courageous in combat but lived up to a more refined standard of behavior: a warrior who had acquired courtly manners, a taste for music and literature, had learned about ceremony and fine clothes. Yet even more significant is the way in which the traditional demonstration of loyalty to the chief or the lord came to be complemented with the literary image of a knight troubadour who was a lover to a lady to whom the knight swore allegiance and loyalty (Le Goff: 53–59).

In the epic poem, *The Song of Roland* (which recounted the destruction of Charlemagne's rearguard by a Basque ambush in 778, and was greatly elaborated and written around 1100) we do not yet find this new romantic hero. The central character, Roland, is depicted with heroic traits that hark back to an age of pagan warriors, to men who rejoiced in the destruction of the enemy, were hot-tempered and impetuous, prone to fits of anger and inclined to jeer at the dead bodies of their enemies. (At the same time, let's not lose sight of the loyalty and love Roland felt for his men, his frank emotions, the innocent simplicity of his heart, his abounding self-confidence).[47]

[47] I m using the Penguin Books edition of *The Song of Roland*, translated with an introduction by Dorothy L. Sayers (1961). I should qualify here that in this poem,

But from the late 11th century onwards, in the southern part of France, where the intellectual heritage of the Roman Empire remained strong, and where we find a more ordered and calmer society, a new kind of poetry expressing an aristocratic kind of love was invented. An immensely popular example of this "courtly love" was the story of *Tristan*, written between 1155 and 1170, and the poems of Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Chevalier au lion*, *Lancelot*, and *Perceval*, written between 1170 and 1190. In these poems a woman is the focus of the hero's devotion. What the hero seeks above all else is to prove himself worthy of his lady's love, and as the lady is usually married, and above him in social status, beautiful, virtuous, and an expert in the manners of courtly society, the troubadour knight approaches the lady as a humble supplicant ready to live up to her standards in the social arts of courtly life.

The knight, of course, was still expected to take part in genuine warfare and participate in rough tournaments, but in a manner that was chivalrous: seeking fame while protecting the weak, women, widows, and children, showing valor and boldness while avoiding wickedness and brutishness (Keen 1984). He had social duties; he could not envision himself as a berserker or a member of a war-band; he was morally bound to defend the faith of Christ against unbelievers, defend his temporal lord, pursue robbers, and avoid false pride, idleness and lechery. As the lord of a place, rather than a mere "footloose" warrior, he had a duty to maintain law and justice. Courage and honor were still central but the knightly warrior was now expected, ideally, to have a definite style, to be well-mounted, well equipped in arms, sharply dressed and gracious, hospitable not only with his comrades in arms but in his benefactions to churches. In the courtly literature, the idea was increasingly expressed that nobility of race, based on birth, demanded the acquisition of 'nobility of manners', acquired from a proper upbringing and founded in achievement (Keen: 158–62).

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as in *Beowulf* and the *Iliad*, we have the conflicting dilemma between the greatest hero and his destructive excesses. Roland rejects his companion Oliver's advice to blow a horn to alert Charlemagne of an enemy attack, which is clearly to blame for the destruction of the king's finest fighters. In his abounding energy, self-confidence, and pride, Roland is the ideal hero, but these same qualities motivate him to ignore the "wise" advice of Oliver, who is portrayed as a more sensible soldier in his practical assessment of the military situation. Oliver, in urging Roland to summon assistance rather than thinking of his own prestige, stands for the virtues of moderation and prudence as contrasted to the folly of heedless courage represented by Roland. This is a tragic epic because Roland is a hero who inevitably has a fatal flaw, specifically, his immense pride.

As stated by Keens, chivalry was not a religious but a secular ideal grounded in a "martially oriented aristocracy." It was a new code of honor of the warrior groups which "owed its strong Christian tone to the fact that those groups which operated within the setting of a Christian society" (252). Knights were possessed by a "strong streak of individualism"; what they sought was "worldly honour" rather than salvation.[48] Virtues such as generosity, piety, and devotion to Christian ideals and courtesy to women were, nonetheless, repeatedly stressed in medieval fictional accounts of knights. Of course, in reality, knights oppressed helpless peasants, dishonored ladies, and conquered lands. I would be careful, however, not to disparage these ideals as mere imaginary tales with no bearing on the actual conduct of knights. These ideals were "real" values against which the conduct of knights was measured.

Still, there is much truth to Robert Bartlett's book, *The Making of Europe, Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change, 950–1350* (1993), and its thesis that one of the "most striking aspects" of this era was the acquisitive and aggressive expansionism of the aristocracy.[49] He observed that the 10th to 13th centuries were characterized by a "new" type of acquisitive and evangelical expansionism. This aggression saw German knights moving all the way into Estonia on the Gulf of Finland, into Silesia along the Oder, and throughout Bohemia, carried by a few belligerent families of Franks, who also established new kingdoms in

[48] Keen's research is singularly focused on chivalry. He writes of individualism, the knight errant, as a characteristic of "chivalrous culture" (250). The roots of European individualism have been discovered in just about every cultural trend, movement, or period in European history.

[49] Wickham welcomed Bartlett's argument as a corrective against the "very naive image" of earlier medievalists (1994); he was specifically referring to Dawson's book, *The Making of Europe*, as an example of this naiveté. I have the opposite impression. It is Wickham who presumes that the violent impulses of Christian knights give the lie to any claims of cultural progress. Dawson had no illusions about the incredible difficulties Christians faced as members of a world of warlike barbarians. In fact, he faced up to the vital importance of the energetic and heroic ethos of barbarians (1932: 67–99; see also 1950). Bloch, too, had no illusions (1961b: 410–12). Wickham's criticism is best directed against "progressive" academics; they have a hard time integrating barbarians into any notion of Western progression other than as victims. This intellectualist approach is openly visible in Berman's book, which I otherwise value greatly and have relied on, that the West came into being as a "culture" and "a civilization" only when medieval Europe adopted, rediscovered and revived, Greek philosophy, Hebrew religion, and Roman law during the twelfth century – to the explicit exclusion of "pre-Western cultures," the "Germanic and other tribal peoples of Europe before the eleventh century." See his *Law and Revolution*, 2–3. Not long ago I approached the West from this idealist perspective (see Duchesne 2005).

Castile, Portugal, Cyprus, Jerusalem, and Sicily, and carried predatory missions into the Welsh and Irish frontiers.

According to Bartlett this surge of aristocratic expansionism after 950 was due, in the case of the Franks who were the most vigorous, to the fact that a growing number of aristocratic sons could no longer acquire new lands closer to home (49). In his review, Wickham correctly points out that the Carolingians had already shown the same expansionary movements in their colonizing campaigns against lands inhabited by Saxons and Slavs. But it is not clear to me why Wickham traces the "long history of aristocratic aggression" back only to the 8th century, as if unaware of the earlier barbarians who had brought an end to the Roman Empire. My view should be clear by now: the "vigor, boldness, and brutality" Bartlett saw as a sudden and peculiar occurrence of the 10th century was part of the same free willfulness Indo-Europeans had exhibited for thousands of years. Gimbutas has the right standpoint when she observes that the "terribly restless" and "rapacious" nature of Indo-Europeans (in contrast to the sedentary Old Europeans "who stayed in the same location generation after generation") was displayed throughout their history. She lists the following dynamic movements: i) the first waves of "Kurgans" who migrated out of the steppes; ii) the Corded Ware and Bell-Beaker peoples who spread throughout central and western Europe; iii) the Indo-Iranians who stormed into Persia and India during the second millennium; iv) the Celts who expanded out of central Europe into France, Spain, Italy and Britain during the Late Bronze-Early Iron Age; v) the Greeks who colonized the Mediterranean and the Black Sea coasts during the 8th and 7th centuries BC; vi) the Romans who created a vast empire; vi) the Germanic and Slavic peoples who brought the Roman empire down; and, vii) the Vikings who ventured across the Atlantic and into the Black Sea. She attributes these expansionist drives to the Indo-European "social system and economy [which] provided unlimited possibilities for invasion and conquest" (1997: 18–30, 353–55). However, while Gimbutas, as I argued earlier, paid keen attention to the horse-riding mobility and aristocratic individualism of Indo-European speakers, she never conceptualized their aristocratic culture other than negatively as a system based on patriarchal men.[50]

[50] Recently, Mann has directed his attention away from the inter-state system, making the almost generic observation that "Europeans made war with greater enthusiasm and over a longer space of time than almost anyone else" (2006: 368). But then

The expansionist aggression of the West is an inescapable expression of its roots in aristocratic men who are free and therefore headstrong and ambitious, sure of themselves, easily offended, and unwilling to accept quiet subservience. The "civilizing process" of this era brought under restraint the original ferocity of the barbarians. But the goal of the Church was to spiritualize the baser instincts of this class, not to extirpate and emasculate them.[51] The highly-strung and obstinate aristocrat has been a fundamental source of destruction in Western history as well as the source of all that is good and inspiring. The same expansionist period 950–1350 that Bartlett condemned saw the Truce of God, courtly love, the invention of the university, a scholastic commitment to dialogue based on logic and evidence, the rise of autonomous cities, Romanesque and Gothic architecture, a new polyphonic music, and more.

Aristocratic liberty and the Rise of Representative Institutions

It may be supposed that the Christian enhancement of royal authority and the belief that a feudal king was a human image of God weakened the spirit of aristocratic liberty. But together with the divination of kingly rule came the Christian idea that kings had a religious duty to advance righteousness and justice on earth, to observe Christian beliefs, protect and encourage the construction of churches and perform acts of compassion. This stress on the Christian duties of kinship was increased by the Gregorian reform movement – which Berman refers to as the "Papal Revolution" – of the 11th and 12th centuries. This movement insisted that kings were not religious rulers in charge of exercising the teachings of Christianity. The pope and the clergy were the ones with the right to exercise legislative, administrative, and judicial powers within their own domain; and even kings, in respect to their service to God, were subject to the teachings of the Church. Just like everyone else, kings stood in need of salvation, over which the

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he argues that this enthusiasm was a particular attribute of the reproductive requirements of the system of vassalage and landholding in feudal medieval society – a view rather close to Brenner's conclusions (1983).

[51] It should be evident from what I have said about Christianity's assimilation of Greek, Roman and Celtic-Germanic values that I disagree with Nietzsche's derision of Christianity for having emasculated the barbarians "only to put them," as Kaufmann words it, "behind bars in monasteries" (195).

Church held doctrinal authority; and just as kings were said to rule by the grace of God, so did they have a duty not to fall into disgrace, as understood by the clergy and the pope.

Even during the 12th and 13th centuries, when there was a reassertion of monarchical power in France and England, combined with the revival of Roman law, which provided kings with more exalted and definite concepts of royal authority in administration and law-making, the king was still envisioned as a *feudal* monarch bound to each of his vassals by a contract specifying reciprocal rights and obligations. The "patrimonial" authority of kings did increase with the rise of a bureaucracy of royal agents, sheriffs, and financiers. Yet, despite these developments, medieval kings remained aristocratic rulers with a contractual obligation to seek the vassal's advice and approval on questions of war, justice, administration, and taxation. It was with a strong traditional sense of their primordial liberty that nobilities throughout Europe imposed upon kings such famous documents of "right of resistance" or "constitutional" charters as the *Magna Carta* of 1215, the Hungarian Golden Bull of 1222, the Assizes of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, the Privilege of the Brandenburg nobles, the Aragonese Act of Union of 1287, and the Pact of Koszyce of Poland in 1374 (Myers 1975: 19; Bloch: 452).

Notwithstanding the differences between these charters and acts, reflecting varying times and places, their underlying theme was the principle of mixed sovereignty. This principle recognized the "rights" of both the king and his vassals: as the first lord of the realm, the king, had the right to take initiatives, to choose men for appointive offices, to enforce the law, and to protect the territory, but at the same time it was the king's duty to seek the counsel and consent of his barons. The best known expression of this principle is the *Magna Carta* imposed upon King John (1167–1216) by his vassals. This charter stated, in exact terms, the obligations of the vassals to the king and the occasions when feudal aids were to be paid, while also directing other clauses against abuses in the royal courts, and asserting that the king could receive additional financial assistance only by the assent of his feudal tenants-in-chief (Swindler 1965; Holt 1992). I need hardly say that this "great charter" did not settle the desire on the part of both parties to tilt the balance of power in their favor. Just as subsequent kings were inclined to evade the charter and repeat abuses, so too were future vassals inclined to govern their own territories without royal authority. Yet, for all the troubles, including the breaching of contracts and the rebellions

and the civil wars, the *aristocratic* principle of sovereignty by consent was the hallmark of feudal governments. The king was not above the aristocracy; he was first among equals.

It was this very principle which laid the groundwork for the development of feudal monarchies into representative or parliamentary governments. "It was assuredly no accident," says Bloch, "that the representative system in the very aristocratic form of the English Parliament, the French 'Estates', the *Stande* of Germany, and the Spanish Cortes, originated in states which were only just emerging from the feudal stage and still bore its imprint. Nor was it an accident that in Japan, where the vassal's submission was much more unilateral, nothing of the kind emerged…" (1961b: 452). Indeed, parliaments appeared in most of Latin Christendom in the 13th and 14th centuries, with nearly all of them surviving until the 17th century. The name "parliament" (from the French word *parler*) was originally used to refer to instances in which the king met with his feudal advisors to discuss matters of state, but the importance of the evolution of parliament was in how it came to address not just the privileges of barons and knights but of townsmen and prosperous farmers who lacked titles of nobility but who managed to impose their own will and interests upon feudal society (Bisson 1973; Myers 1975). It is not my intention to write about the rise of merchants and the way this class came to acquire corporate privileges for their towns, and how the three "estates" of nobles, clergy, and townsmen came to participate in parliaments where questions of war, justice, and taxation might be raised. Rather, my point is that the privileges of the aristocracy were not antithetical to the idea of bourgeois "rights" and "liberties" but were instead their original inspiration and precedent.

It would be a great simplification, however, to conceive aristocratic liberalism as an "essential" force, which on its own, brought about the uniquely European society of parliaments and estates. To continue with the Gregorian reform, which illustrates the living legacy of the classical world and the worldly ambitions of Christianity, one cannot ignore the "tremendous" legal transformation of the period 1050–1200 associated with the Investiture Controversy. The aftermath of this controversy was the recognition by the crown of the church's corporate autonomy, and the fact that the church, in acquiring independent law-making powers, went on to cultivate a whole new legal system deeply indebted to Roman concepts but which constituted, in the words of Berman, "the first modern Western legal system": the first

comprehensive and rational systematization of law (Berman: 85–119). This was a "modern" system built on the legacy of the Justinian reformation of Roman law (6th century) but which went beyond it by analyzing and synthesizing all authoritative statements concerning the nature of law, the various sources of law, and the definitions and relationships between the different and separate kinds of law (divine law, natural law, human law, the law of the church, the law of princes, enacted law, customary law) – which came to constitute the intellectual and legal basis for the reconstitution of medieval Europe into a plurality of estates in which the form of central government was a monarchy ruling over a society composed of kingdoms, baronies, bishoprics, urban communes, guilds, universities, each with important duties and privileges. This society of estates, backed by new systems of law, was unique to Europe. It was ultimately the presence of an aristocratic spirit within the West that precluded the formation of despotic governments demanding obedience and nameless servility from the population.

Enough perhaps has been said to show how much the creativity of the West was rooted in a culture of free aristocrats. The contrast between a despotic East and a European world committed to liberty finds it origins in the ancient Greeks. Hippocrates (460 BC –370 BC), the celebrated founder of the science of medicine, saw the war between Greeks and Persians in light of a fundamental clash between West and East. Europeans, he observed, were independent, willing to take risks, aggressive and warlike, while Asians were peaceful to the point of lacking initiative, "not their own masters…but ruled by despots" (in Goldhill 2002: 7). Europeans loved liberty for which they were willing to fight and die, whereas Asians were content to live in servitude in exchange for comfort and security. This libertarian attitude continues in the Christianized hero-warrior.

It is in the early modern era that Europe experiences what some have called "the taming or domestication of the feudal nobility" (Taylor (2004: 33), the transformation of the aristocratic class from independent warrior chieftains to a courtly nobility dedicated to advising and serving royal power. This new noble class was no longer associated with a heroic code of honor but a humanist education. The ideal was no longer training in chivalrous war but in the cultivation of the capacities of rhetoric and persuasion, courtesy and "civility". These newer ideals were seen to be the talents required by the newly emerging nation-states. The "war-making" states of Europe desired some measure of domestic peace within their territorial borders. The rowdiness

and disorderly temperament of the old nobility came to be gradually identified with the state of nature or the "natural" condition of humanity in its early juvenile state. Fighting "was no longer seen as the normal way of life of the nobility," except when it was in the service of the Crown (37). This transformation in matters of civility went along with the increasing commercialization of society, the consolidation of power in the hands of merchants, bankers, and improving landlords, together with a new kind of self-consciousness which gave central place to the economic, useful role of human beings. New, softer virtues were emphasized; sociability, fellowship, courtesy, as well as industriousness, domesticity, and polite entertainment in coffeehouses, theaters, schools and gardens. The more a society turned to commerce, the more it was seen to promote peaceful and orderly existence – against the destructiveness of the search for glory. This was a long drawn out process, writes Taylor; until by 1800 commerce largely came to replace war as the paramount activity with which the state should be concerned (37–48, 69–82).[52]

This newly emerging view of what the purpose of a political union ought to be was reflected, as Fukuyama points out, in the contract theories of Hobbes and Locke. These modern thinkers sought to reduce in importance from political life the excessive pride of the aristocratic class, which was blamed for the violence and misery in the world, as witnessed with such intensity during the English Civil War and the horrifying Thirty Years War which killed nearly a quarter of all Germans and laid waste to towns and countryside alike. Hobbes, seen by Leo Straus as the founder of political science and "creator of political hedonism" (1969), hoped to convince the more urbane, but still violent society of his time, that the best state would be one in which its function was not that of producing or promoting a virtuous life

[52] Taylor draws on Ann Bryson's *From Courtesy to Civility* (1998), and Philip Carter's, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society* (2001). This transformation from the martial temper of ancient and medieval times to the softer and civil temper of modern times is clearly conveyed in David Hume's *An Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1777). He specifies that the following epithets can be attributed to individuals belonging in a good government: "sociable, good-natured, humane, merciful, grateful, friendly, generous, beneficent" as "amiable qualities" (176); which he contrasts to "the martial temper of the Romans, inflamed by continual wars" (254), and to the martial bravery of the Scythians, how that nation destroyed "the sentiments of humanity" (255), as well as to how "the excessive bravery and resolute inflexibility of Charles the XIIth ruined his own country" (258). Mind you, Hume still esteemed the ancient virtues.

(in the Platonic-Aristotelian sense) but of safeguarding the natural right to life and security of its inhabitants. This state, in contrast to the aristocratic state interested in honor, would ensure the prosperity and happiness of its citizens. It would do so, according to Fukuyama, by rechanneling the *thymotic* and passionate drives of humans into productive outlets, wherein men would satisfy their vanity by seeking approbation for their riches or by seeking recognition for their services to the state and the public order.

Book IV of Plato's *Republic,* as we saw earlier, distinguished three elements or natural capacities within the human soul: i) the capacity to reason, ii) the desire for food, sexual pleasure, and material gain, and iii) the "spirited" or thymotic element. In the ideal person who has achieved self-mastery, these three elements would be ordered in a hierarchy wherein the rational element would be at the top *governing* the spirited element at the intermediate level as well as restraining the bodily appetites at the lower level (1977: 129–43). The balanced personality is one in which the spirited element is guided by reason in the performance of its virtue of courage and honorable living, and in which the appetites perform their functions in a manner consistent with the virtue of temperance. It is my contention that the aristocratic culture of Indo-Europeans was *dominated* by men whose souls were "too high-spirited, too intrepid, too indifferent about fortune".[53] Although by the

[53] These apt words come from Hume, who further writes of the "perpetual wrangling," "roughness and harshness" of emotions in feudal society (257–58). This view goes back to Plato's own observation that "the Thracians and Scythians and northerners [Indo-Europeans] generally" were peoples "with a reputation for a high-spirited character" (132). Aristotle added to this observation a distinction between the "high-spirited" but barbaric passions of "those who live in Europe" and the "high-spirited" and "intelligent" virtues of the Hellenic peoples. The Hellenic peoples were different from European barbarians in bringing reason to bear on their strong thymotic drives. Aristotle further observed that while the peoples of Asia were intelligent, they were "wanting in spirit and therefore they are always in a state of subjection and slavery" (in Hay 1966: 5). Strabo later observed of the Celts that "the whole race is madly fond of war, high-spirited, and quick to battle, but otherwise straightforward and not of evil character." And: "To the frankness and high-spiritedness of their temperament must be added the traits of childish boastfulness and love of decoration" (in Cunliffe 2001a: 362–363). Similar ethnographic observations of berserkers are contained in Speidel (2002). It is quite interesting that scholars who have long sensed Western "restlessness" have ignored what ancient writers themselves have said about the "high spiritedness" of Europeans. The ethnographic observations of the educated in ancient times are viewed with suspicion. Yet, at the same time, multicultural historians, as I pointed out in chapter four, have eagerly embraced the image of highly aggressive European imperialists (see Christian (384–401).

time of Plato and Aristotle the virtue of *sophrosyne* had toned down the tiger-like ferocity of the Homeric heroes, the Greeks still valued the brave citizen and disciplined hoplite fighter. Plato ranked wisdom as the highest good but he also criticized the over-intellectualized person lacking in strong drives and bodily fortitude. Aristotle believed that pride was "the crown of the virtues".[54]

Now, Fukuyama thinks that modern bourgeois liberalism was "an effort at social engineering that sought to create social peace by changing human nature itself" (185). I would suggest that modern liberalism be seen as an effort to alter the aristocratic nature of Western man. In the West, the spirited or thymotic part of the soul was long free to play a dominant role both in its pristine existence through Indo-European barbarians and in its sublimated form through Greek, Roman, and Christian medieval times. This spirit was the force, the passion behind the restless and relentless style of rational discoursing, artistic creation, and expansionism of Europeans. But insomuch as this drive was contained and pacified – conceived as the rational pursuit of one's self-interest – the spirited part of the soul, I would argue, was *demoted to being just one type of desire similar to the appetitive desire for survival and comfort*. The aggression associated with the indignation and ambition of the spirited element became, consequently, indistinguishable from the aggression associated with the self-preservative and sexual instincts of the body. This is evident in Freud's famous concept of the *id*, which thus came to include in its definition the appetitive and spirited part of Plato's soul. These two parts of the soul came to be viewed as elements of the same instinct which characterized all animals. Humans were unique only in their capacity to employ their reason to

[54] "It is with honor that proud men appear to be concerned; for it is honor that they chiefly claim, but in accordance with their deserts.[T]he proud man, since he deserves most, must be good in the highest degree, for the better man always deserves more, and the best man most. [H]e will also bear himself with moderation towards wealth and power and all good or evil fortune, whatever may befall him, and will be neither over-joyed by good fortune nor over-pained by evil. For not even towards honor does he bear himself as if it were a very great thing. Power and wealth are desirable for the sake of honor…" (991–93). Aristotle, no doubt, was at a distance from the reckless world of Celtic berserkers. While "it is for a noble end that the brave man endures and acts as courage directs," "he would be a sort of madman or insensible person if he feared nothing…as they say Celts do not" (976). Wisdom was the highest good: "[F]or man, the life according to reason is best and pleasantest, since reason more than anything else is man" (1105). *Nicomachean Ethics*, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, edited and with an introduction by Richard McKeon (Random House 1941).

pursue their desires in a civil manner. It was forgotten that Plato, as I read him, had made a clear distinction between the aggression exhibited by humans when they "feel angry and indignant" and when they strive for prestige, and the aggression that is subservient to the desires of the body (1977: 137, see also 307). Plato belonged to a culture that still cherished the "aristocratic" in man and this is why he gave a more praiseworthy status to the "spirited" element of the soul than to the bodily appetites; this is because he understood that this element is the seat of honor.

Accordingly, to the degree that the spirited part of the Western soul was suppressed by the ethical demands of modern democratic liberalism, re-channeled into economic inventiveness, or confounded with bodily appetites, it became increasingly difficult for scholars to attribute the restlessness of the West to this part of the soul. Since the restlessness of the West could not be attributed to biological drives equally present in all human beings, the tendency was to attribute it to the purely rational part of the soul. There are, of course, many theories which have denied Western reason any unique restlessness, and have instead explained its rise, as we saw in previous chapters, according to certain features of the natural environment, or simply in terms of miscellaneous accidental configurations which defy explanation. The point is that those who believe that the West did possess special qualities having to do with innovation and exploration have directed their attention to the rationality of Western economic agents and the institutional framework within which these agents were able to express their calculated interests freely. Max Weber is the best known classical exponent of the thesis that the development of the West was due to its "specific and peculiar" rationalism. As commendable as this interpretation is, I hope to have persuaded some that the roots of the West are to be found in a profoundly different aristocratic character that first came into the light of history in the Pontic steppes.

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